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The Mysterious Monogram

A COMPOSITE STORY

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THE MYSTERIOUS MONOGRAM

A COMPOSITE STORY

—BY—

THE LUCKY FRIDAY CLUB

QUINCY, ILLINOIS

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FOREWORD

This book is unique in many particulars. The members of the Lucky Friday Club, a social and literary society meeting every fortnight were instructed by its program committee to write a composite story. Accordingly each member of the club was assigned the task of writing a chapter of the story, to be read at the successive meetings of the society. The plot was developed progressively, and the book like Topsy "jes growed." No outline was followed, and each author allowed his own fancy to dictate the course of the story, taking into consideration only that which had already been written. No author could begin his chapter nor lay any plans for it until the preceding chapter had been read at a regular meeting, for before that he could not know what turn would be given to the story by the last writer.

The selection of a title to the story was left until after the final chapter had been read, when it was determined by ballot and the choice made from several that had been proposed.

A popular school mistress, the club's mascot, was given the first assignment, and the first short chapter indicates that she intended the heroine to follow the stage, thereby unconsciously expressing her own theatrical and romantic turn of mind. The next chapter, by a masculine author, brings the strong character of the girl's father into prominence, and leaves the story at a critical point.

The authors of the following chapters, alternating first a lady and then a gentleman, develop the story into a complex and intensely interesting composition. The book is submitted to the reader in the belief that it compares favorably with many of the modern stories by professional writers.

It is needless to say that the story created an intense interest among the members who were kept on the tip-toe of expectation, because no one knew what was coming. There were only two or three absences of members during the entire season.

The Mysterious Monogram

CHAPTER I.

Once upon a time, as all good stories begin, the chief train dispatcher of the Great American Railway had cleared the track and the special of the president of the road, with the right of way for a fast run to Chicago, only waited the conductor's signal to begin the trip.

Mr. Warner, the president, pacing back and forth in the car, was anxious to be off. With him was his only daughter, Virginia, and it was Virginia who was the cause of this hurried trip.

One would hardly have thought of Warner as the president of this mighty road, and yet he had held that position for years. Really, one might say he was the road. The small shrunken figure gave no hint of the wonderful executive powers he possessed. To his co-workers he was a man of iron—an intellect without heart or soul. To his daughter he was all gentleness and love.

He adored his daughter, who had been left him by his wife who died when Virginia was but a small child, and now she was twenty. The father had never been too busy to look after the welfare of his daughter, and she had been given advantages that fall to the lot of but few girls.

Today his mind was not occupied so much with the responsibilities of his high position as with something that threatened his home life. Virginia had developed a "mad desire," so the father put it, "to go on the stage." To this he could not and never would give his consent. Her mother had been an actress of much note, but of this Virginia had been kept in ignorance.

For days the girl had been studying the problem, how best to present the matter to her father. She felt sure there would be great opposition on his part, but the call of the blood could not be put off much longer and soon he must know.

How the subject had been approached that morning at the breakfast table, or what had been said, Virginia never had a clear idea—only that in unmistakable language her father had commanded her to relinquish all hope.

The father had yet to learn that he had given his will of iron to his daughter.

CHAPTER II.

Ding! dong! whchee! and the splendid train was off with the speed of the wind. Faithful Old Jack Hinston was at the throttle, with oral orders to see what old Twenty-seven could do.

Trusted and tried Old Jack had been with the Great American ever since the road was built. He was a fixture. He had known Virginia from babyhood. All the employees at the home office knew Virginia—knew her for her sunny disposition, for her graceful ways, for her friendly chatter, and for the air of equality and comradeship which followed her slight figure wherever she went.

Today as Old Jack touched his cap with his grimy hand when Mr. Warner had given him his running orders, he noticed a look of appeal in Virginia's eyes that told him more plainly than words could tell that she was in trouble. He also noticed that the president was unusually excited, although endeavoring to suppress his feelings by a forced attempt to be interested in the speed of the train. "Give her all she'll take and see what she can do," he had said as he waved his hand and passed on. But Old Jack had learned to attend to his engine and to mind his own business, so he only mumbled, "Poor dear, poor dear," and at the first signal from the conductor he opened the throttle and was off, and he thought no more of the troubled face till he pulled into the long shed at Chicago.

The train was off. The president was pacing the floor of his private coach smoking in silence. Virginia sat near in moody defiance. It was the first time her will and her father's had clashed. It was, on her part, her first disobedience. It was the first time his authority had been defied, and by his own daughter—the tiny tot whom twenty years ago he had named Virginia in honor of her mother's native state—by the little girl whose helplessness and pretty ways had encouraged and inspired him to make a success when her mother had been so suddenly taken from him—by the sprightly young woman on whom he lavished so much care, and for whose future he had laid so many plans. Defied by the sole object of his hopes, his ambition, and his love. And as he brooded on the step he had resolved to take, he glanced at Virginia, sitting there in wretched silence. What a picture!—her trim figure, her lithe form, her easy bearing, her jaunty grace, her dark hair, her finely chiseled features, her dark soulful eyes, now swimming in ill-concealed tears, and withal a determined look on her countenance that he had never noticed there before, and which excited the great executive's admiration and gave him a different view of his daughter's character than he had ever noted before, —she had inherited her mother's grace of form, feature, and voice, but her father's resolute will.

As his glance rested on her for a moment, his thoughts unconsciously went back to the time, seven and twenty years ago, when he was plain James Warner, civil engineer, with but little money and no position. He was discouraged and in despair. He had strayed into a theater in Philadelphia more by accident than by design. The play was in progress. Juanita Lockland was in the midst of her great act. Her simple Grecian costume served to accent the charm of her supple form; her dimpled arms were stretched forth in earnest appeal to the exultant villain who stood haughtily before her, his dark thoughts plainly shadowed on his evil countenance—his victim was in his power. In her tearful dark eyes was a look of imploring helplessness; in her clear full voice was a pathos that would touch the stoniest heart; from her intelligent face shone forth a saintly purity and queenly dignity that was irresistible. The villain trembled, his purpose wavered, his conscience awoke; he stepped back cowering; he slunk away—virtue had vanquished vice. Juanita was master of her art. The great crowd went wild. Tears and cheers were mingled from parquet to galleries. Bouquets showered on bouquets. But hark! a fearful explosion—a puff of smoke—a sheet of flame, and everybody was involved in a panic—a pell-mell rush for safety in which each thought only of himself; in which each made a blind dash for an exit—a panic in which the weak went down before the strong, and the strong opposed each other in headlong, heedless haste. The stage was a seething furnace, with every exit cut off by flames. Juanita stood alone, transfixed by fear, powerless to move, certain death staring her in the face.

James Warner had been deeply moved by the great act he had just witnessed. He had an almost uncontrollable impulse to rush onto the stage and throttle the villain. He had exulted at the triumph of the slight girl in her purity over the burly impersonation of evil before her. At the first cry of "Fire!" his trained mind had recognized the fatal consequences of the mishap to the stage machinery. His quick perception told him there was but one chance in a hundred to save himself, much less to save the woman who stood fifty feet from him, and between whom and himself was a sea of frightened men and women. He did not hesitate an instant. He dashed forward through flame and smoke, through the confused and fighting mass of humanity. He seized the terrified Juanita and by almost superhuman effort bore her to the open air and to safety, but not without frightful injuries to himself—injuries he would bear to his dying day.

Juanita was unconscious now, but in that awful struggle when both were in imminent peril of death, their eyes had met and she had murmured, "Brave, noble man!" He knew then that he loved Juanita, and he knew then that she loved him.

James Warner was a hero. For the first time in his life he experienced the pleasure of public praise. He had saved the life of the public's idol—its darling. He was a new man, filled with new ambitions. He loved Juanita with all the ardor of his resolute nature. Through his long struggle back to health, no other was so constant in attentions as Juanita. She had found a brave spirit, a noble nature, and she was too noble and truthful to conceal her great admiration for his bravery and self-sacrifice.

He was determined to win her; he felt that he had won her. But how was he to provide for so precious a being? He was poor; he was unknown; and she was in love with her art. She was recognized as a great artist. Would she be willing to sacrifice her profession to become the wife of an unknown man who had no claims on her other than those imposed by an accidental crisis that had so strangely brought them together? But their eyes had met in a great common peril. He had saved her from a horrible death; she had saved him from deepest despair. He knew that he must ask her to share his hard lot, and he felt sure of her answer; but he hesitated because he was poor.

The train rushed on and James Warner was still deep in his reverie—How the papers rang with Juanita's praises as an actress; of the terrible accident that cost hundreds their lives; of Warner's bravery in rescuing the people's idol; how he had lingered on a bed of pain, recovering from his injuries; Juanita's devotion; his recovery; his recognition by the promoters of the Great American; his rise to influence and power; his marriage to Juanita; their blissful honeymoon, the birth of their beautiful daughter; his wife's tragic death three years later; his struggles with fortune; his final triumph and success; his present trouble—all these memories hurried before him in a swift moving panorama, as he glanced at his daughter Virginia—his wife's other self—and he almost relented of the stern res lve he had made that morning, when Virginia had announced her purpose to follow her mother's footsteps and become an actress.

He was about to speak to Virginia and in part at least consent to her wishes. He would reason with her and be reasonable—he would compromise. But just at this moment the train slowed down and came to a standstill at a small station. Mr. Sherley, the conductor, handsome, broad-shouldered, precise, came hurriedly in with a telegram for the president. While his chief read, "H. leaves 3 p. m., J. S. P.," Sherley stood in respectful silence, cap in hand; and as he stood he noticed the troubled, defiant look on the face of the president's beautiful daughter, whom he had known for a dozen years, ever since he came into James Warner's service. He was now conscious of a mute appeal for help, but was cut short in his observations by his superior—"Sherley, send this wire at once; don't lose a moment." It was but a moment when the operator ticked off "J. S. P., Chicago. Hold H. till I arrive at all hazards. My expense. J. W." The conductor was directed to urge Old Jack to put on more steam and reach Chicago at the earliest possible moment. The railway magnate was on his mettle. The mad race was becoming interesting.

But he would not be unfair. He would give Virginia a chance to change her purpose. He approached her and said, "Daughter, dear, I have been thinking the matter all over again, and I would like to talk to you further. I do not wish to seem unreasonable. I have set my heart on making you happy. I have higher and nobler things in mind for you than to become an actress. You have had all the advantages of refinement and culture; many of the stage folk are base at heart; their morals are low; their aims are not to elevate, but to debase. You are attractive; you have wealth and social position; I have great ambitions for you. You know my old-time friend, vice-president of the Overland; he is wealthy, cultured, influential. His only son Harry is twenty-four, and will doubtless inherit his father's wealth and position. My interests would be greatly advanced and your happiness assured if the Great American and the Overland lines were in closer relations; if my daughter and his—" But Virginia's ire was aroused; she could contain herself no longer. "What! Grandpa Tom of the Overland!" she cried, "never! the simpering old doddard! His son? Impossible! a conceited snob with a foreign accent and a sickening drawl! Never! I'll be a nun first." Her father held up his hand as a sign to stop for him to explain. But she did not heed and continued, "Why do you bother me with such things now? There is time for such matters when I have made a name for myself; when I have shown what I can do. I know that many followers of the stage are not refined; I know that some of them are ignorant; I know that there are more who fail than succeed; but the stage can do a great work. It should be elevated; its moral tone should be improved; and how can this be done unless refined people go on the stage? O, I think it most noble 'to hold, as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.' I have determined to give the next twenty years at least to art, to the people, to elevating the stage. After I am successful; when I have demonstrated my powers, then and then only will I consent to think of my own happiness. Then I shall be your dutiful daughter again, and shall sacrifce myself to your ambtions, if you still insist on an alliance with Grandpa Tom's snobbish Harry."

Poor Warner! what could he do with his headstrong daughter? He knew the plan he had proposed would be obnoxious to his daughter. He had never seen Harry, and neither had she, but he had great respect for "Grandpa Tom" as he was familiarly called by the subordinates. He was inordinately opposed to his daughter's intended course, not so much that he disapproved of the stage, but he honestly felt that she should have higher aspirations—besides his word was out. He had forbidden her to follow what he knew were her inherited tendencies, although he had never told her of her mother's career, nor breathed that she had followed the stage. His daughter's speech had again hardened his heart and he said simply, "You shall obey me in this matter. My daughter shall not disgrace me. I will carry out my purpose."

Virginia would hear no more. She arose and entered her stateroom and closed the door with a bang. Her father was more angry than before. He paced the car in deep thought, and as he brooded he recalled that she had said, "I'll be a nun first." As he mused on he thought, "Yes, and perhaps much sooner than she thinks," and he glanced around toward his daughter's door as though he feared the mere thought might have been heard. He smoked another cigar. He began another reverie. He thought of his many business struggles; of the men under him; how they all worked with clock-like precision; how faithful many of them had been—Old Jack had saved his life in the memorable strike; Sherley had started as a lad of fourteen, and was now the trusted conductor of the president's special—efficient, courteous, and resourceful. Many others he recalled as being loyal and faithful; but he felt that many of his men did not love him—he had lived so long without love, except the love of his child, and he now felt he was losing that, too. "Why dwell on these things!" he thought, "I will make the best of matters as they are." The train slowed down, but started up again almost instantly. Mr. Warner glanced out of the car window—the scenery was beautiful, and for the first time that day he allowed himself to notice. The white sail of a distant yacht stood out sharp and clear; a field, a farmhouse, a pretty clump of trees whisked by; an automobile with a single passenger was just turning out of sight around a distant hedgerow, and the jaunty tip of the chauffeur's cap seemed to strike him as familiar, but the trend of his observation was interrupted by the conductor who thrust a dispatch into his hand. It read laconically: "H leaves four sharp—ten thousand." The president winced, looked at his watch and said under his breath, "It's worth it and more." To the waiting Sherley he said but one word, "Rush!"

The great engine seemed to leap faster than ever. Old Jack's watch showed 3:20. Twenty minutes more and the president's special was flying through the suburbs of Chicago. Houses and pedestrians darted by in a confused streak. People wondered why the engineer did not slow down. They little knew of the anguish of a lonely father. They did not know the tragic event that was destined to make a great sensation and to humble a father's haughty spirit. Five minutes more and the great H. would be gone. Already No. 27 was coming to a standstill. Already the excited father had knocked at his daughter's door without response. Already he had rushed in and shouted to his daughter, "Hurry! we must catch that—" but the stateroom was empty; Virginia was not there; a bit of lace fluttered from a window-catch.

CHAPTER III.

In a wild and secluded spot, on the far away rugged coast of Maine, dwelt a sturdy and noble, though humble, Scotch family by the name of Thornton, consisting of the father, mother, and three sons. The parents though poor in this world's goods were rich in good deeds and thoughts, and were especially ambitious to have their sons become well educated, and to make their marks in the world.

John Thornton, always a man of limited means, could not afford to educate his sons as he would have liked to do. They were sent to the village school and acquired the usual meager education thus afforded. This schooling did not satisfy the ambitions and aspirations of the eldest son, George, in whom we have a greater interest. The environment under which this boy was reared, was such as to instill into his very soul a love for nature and art, surrounded as he was by nature's most glorious handiwork—the restless, heaving, breathing, foaming sea, dashing against the rocky, barren coast, on the one side while to the west beautiful green mountains lifted their lofty peaks heavenward, along the foothills of which the stately pine trees with their evergreen and fragrant foliage swayed in the breezes—while stretching between were the rolling prairies with their waving grass, threaded here and there with silver streams of sparkling water, and occasional fields of grain, amidst which were the picturesque cottages of the sturdy farmers—one of nature's great art galleries. What wonder that a boy brought up amid such surroundings and especially after having inherited artistic tendencies from his great grandfather on his mother's side, who had acquired more than local fame as an artist in Scotland in his day, should feel in his inmost soul an intense longing to reproduce the beauties of nature as he saw and felt them. From his earliest childhood, he began to show great talent in various ways, such as sketching landscapes on the barks of trees, or on the smooth surfaces of the sea-washed rocks.

This great talent with which God had so richly endowed this youth, was lying practically dormant, for want of development, a luxury, which was beyond the reach of both parents and son, and it began to look as if this talent was doomed to obscurity, when on a certain occasion James Stewart, a wealthy merchant from New York, in search of seclusion from business cares, spent a month among the mountains and foothills of Maine with a party of friends, and while fishing from the rocks on the coast one day, his eye chanced to fall upon a small landscape sketch upon the face of one of the rocks along the shore, and being a lover of art and the possessor of a rich collection of rare paintings, he recognized more than ordinary merit in this sketch, and immediately began to make inquiry as to the probable origin of the same, whereupon he was informed by a swarthy fisherman on the shore that the sketch was the work of George Thornton. Further inquiry elicited the additional information that the boy was a resident of the nearby village, which resulted in George Thornton's meeting the great merchant, after the close of the day's fishing expedition. At this time George Thornton was a lad of fifteen—tall, broad shouldered, with large expressive blue eyes, heavy eyebrows, long lashes, and a wealth of golden brown hair. Standing in the presence of James Stewart, with the ruddy glow on his cheeks, he presented a handsome picture, which did not fail to leave its impress upon the great merchant, who, finding that George was without means to further his education or develop his talent, offered to be his benefactor, and send him to college, and later on to send him abroad to complete his education, and to study under some of the great masters.

George Thornton was delighted to be able to realize the dream of his young life, but was too manly to accept these favors without insisting upon doing something in return for his benefactor. Accordingly it was arranged that he should go to New York, be placed in a college, and assist in the great mercantile business out of school hours, that he might feel that he was making his own way. George Thornton was too independent and high-spirited to receive all that his kind friend would lavish upon him. At length after three brief years, crowded full of business and study, the time arrived for him to bid goodby to the many friends that he had made by his manliness and sterling qualities, and sail for Europe.

James Stewart was grieved to see him go, for he loved the young man as his own son, and having no children of his own, this young man had won his heart, and bound him with cords of gold. Every comfort and luxury that wealth could give was bestowed upon George Thornton to make his voyage pleasant and comfortable, and money was provided for the study of his life work.

At the end of a pleasant voyage, he found himself in London, where he remained for a year, studying technique and color under great painters. The next year he went to Madrid and at last to Paris. His first salon picture drew great throngs. It was called "The Sea" and made him famous. He received numerous orders from counts and countesses and people of royalty for portraits. For one picture alone he received $10,000, and was offered $50,000 for another. He lived alone and spent all his time at his art. The praise and exultation which his pictures called forth gave him no thrill, as he felt that he had not yet reached the zenith of his success, and he kept at his work with this thought in view.

After six years of study, success, and triumph, he found himself on board the great steamer Majestic, ready to return to his native land, and having secured his stateroom and attended to all matters pertaining to baggage, he had his steamer chair placed in a sheltered nook on deck with rugs and pillows luxuriously arranged and with plenty of magazines and books to while away the long hours. He seated himself comfortably, intent on watching the hurrying, bustling throng as it surged on board with the usual tearful goodbys and partings. Presently his attention was attracted by two people on deck, an unusual looking couple with a distinguished air, apparently father and daughter, who were leaning over the railing, eagerly scanning the wharf below. He noticed the bond of affection between the two, how the fond father had eyes for no other than his lovely daughter—how proud he was of her, and no wonder! George Thornton thought, as his eyes were riveted upon her—the wonderful grace of bearing, the dark soulful eyes, dark hair, and finely chiseled features—what father would not be proud of such a spirited creature? She was evidently looking for someone and said excitedly, "They are late. Poor Billy will be so heart broken if he does not arrive in time to tell us goodby." Suddenly the gang plank was pulled in, the last passenger aboard, when a cab rushed madly up the street, and stopped abruptly at the wharf, and out jumped Billy and his nurse with a large parcel in her arms. She heard a little familiar voice, "Hurry, nurse, we shall be too late," and they rushed down the gangway, only to find that the great vessel was leaving. His eyes were upturned, scanning the deck in dismay, when the girl called out, "Here I am, Billy, goodby dear," when Billy, seeing her exclaimed in a grief-stricken tone, "O Virginia, I had a present for you, my donkey, my precious donkey, I wanted you to have him." Virginia responded, "Never mind, Billy, you shall express him to me, I will get him and cherish him," whereupon the little fellow was overjoyed and with tears in his eyes waved to Virginia; and she stood leaning over the railing until he was lost from sight.

None of this was lost by George Thornton, and he more than ever felt drawn to the object of his admiration. Soon they were lost to his vision as they left the rail, and mingled with the throng on deck. At a late hour, after passing a quiet evening in reverie, George Thornton retired to his stateroom and was making preparation for a night's rest, when—horrors! a crash, a fearful breaking and snapping of timbers, and then a mad rush for the deck amid a great tumult as the people ran hurriedly to and fro in confusion, some thinly clad carrying their clothes, others moaning and crying hysterically, not knowing the cause of the catastrophe.

George Thornton calmly, but hurriedly, made his toilet, and hastened out on deck to learn what had happened and found that the great Majestic had crashed into another large vessel, under cover of night and the dense fog, and while there was no immediate danger, the passengers must be transferred to the other boat, which was a very hazardous undertaking in mid-ocean. On the stairs he met Virginia and her father making their way out on deck. Something about the calm, reassuring way of this man attracted their attention, and they inquired of him what had happened. He assured them that there was no immediate danger, but said that what was to be done must be done quickly. In this moment of awful suspense and agony, George Thornton went about among the people, exhorting them to compose themselves, so that the work of rescue might be carried on with system. He directed the passengers to help with the boats and launched one himself, into which he helped Virginia, and urged her father to follow her. The boat was quickly filled and instantly lowered, and the oarsmen with mighty stroke bent to the oars and thus, group by group, the whole passenger list, consisting of over a thousand was transferred to the other boat. Then followed the rescue of the crew of the fated vessel, and as the last one left the boat, she was swallowed up by the waves. From their position of safety on the other vessel, the people watched the faithful old boat sink from sight, with many exclamations of thankfulness to and appreciation for their rescuers, chief among whom is George Thornton, the artist. This artist made a great impression upon Virginia, who recognized him as a hero, but he modestly retired from sight, not wishing to attract attention, nor to receive the praises of these people, for whom he so readily risked his life. Thus after a delay of but a few hours, the Theodore Roosevelt, which was not seriously damaged by the collision, proceeded on her way, and they landed in safety, after an uneventful voyage, during which time George Thornton saw very little of Virginia and her father, except at a distance when promenading the deck, or while in the dining saloon.

Two years after this great catastrophe, years that were crowded full of hard work, in his studio in New York, George Thornton decided to take a little rest and recreation, and in order that he might see the beautiful country, and obtain ideas for the great paintings which he had in mind, he started with his chauffeur and full equipment for a long journey across the country. He journeyed westward as far as the state of Illinois and recalling a friend residing in a small town near Chicago, decided to stop over for a few days to rest and to visit with him. The day after his arrival, the weather being good, he started out alone for a short ride into the country. And as he sped along, he turned into a road, on one side of which a hedge fence surrounded a field of golden grain. Suddenly he arrived at the railroad crossing, just beyond whi h his eyes fell upon an object lying near the track, and stopping to investigate, he found to his horror that it was the bruised and bleeding form of a woman. He felt the pulse and finding that life was not yet extinct, tenderly lifted the body into his car and hastened toward the town in search of medical assistance.

CHAPTER IV.

When Virginia entered her stateroom, her whole being was throbbing with emotion. She had become so excited by the hasty words of her father in the conversation at the breakfast table that morning, by this—her first act of deliberate disobedience and by her father's later commands, that she give up at once what she had come to look upon as her life work—all of which seemed to her so cruel and unjust—that it did not seem possible she could stand anything more. Now, to cap the climax, he had had the audacity to propose to her at this time, an alliance with a man whom she did not know and had never seen—Harry Holcomb, the son of old Grandpa Tom.

She hastily raised the window of her stateroom and seated herself by it, hoping that the wind from the flying train would cool her temples, which were throbbing as though they would burst. She had never doubted her father's love until now. He had always been most kind and indulgent, but his course in this matter seemed to her so unjust that she felt he could not love her as he ought. Surely she was right. What could be more worthy, even though her father was wealthy, than to make a name for herself—to devote ten—fifteen—twenty years of her life to the uplifting of the people of the stage—to assist in making the theatrical profession one in which any person might as worthily seek fame as in any other. Her father had made a name fo himself among the mighty men of the nation. Why should he deny to his daughter the same privilege? He had told her he had in mind higher and nobler things for her than to become an actress, and as a sample of what they were had intimated that his interests would be advanced if she would marry Harry Holcomb. She did not want to marry Harry Holcomb nor anyone else at this time. Why should her father want her to marry him when neither of them had ever seen him, and how did he know that Harry Holcomb wanted to marry her? Did he expect her to throw herself at him and try to catch him in that way, or was she a chattel to be bargained for and sold that the interests of the Great American Railway might be advanced?

What was the object of this mad race to Chicago? Was she being taken there to meet the son of Grandpa Tom? Her father had not told her so,, but she could not help but feel that she was the cause of the journey. Surely no man who loved his daughter could act toward her in this way.

As these thoughts, one after another, surged through Virginia's mind, she felt that she must do something to escape the dreadful situation in which she was placed. She thought of appealing to Jack Hinston or Conductor Sherley—either one, she felt sure would help her—but if they did, it would probably be at the cost of the positions which both had worked so many years to obtain. No, she would not ask them to help her. For whatever was done she alone must be responsible.

Just as she had reached this conclusion, she noticed the train was entering a city and was slacking speed as though preparing to stop. Her eye caught the name South Bend from a sign on a factory, and there flashed into her mind a plan which she instantly felt, if she could carry it out, would thwart her father, for a time at least in his mad purpose of marrying his daughter to advance his own interests. She knew that the train would stop only long enough for her father to send or receive a telegram, and what she did must be done quickly.

Leaping hastily from her seat—not noticing in her excitement that her sleeve had caught on the window catch and that a bit of lace had been torn therefrom—she carefully opened the stateroom door and saw her father with his back towards her, sitting in deep meditation in the other end of the car. Quickly putting on her hat and seizing her suit case, she slipped from the room, carefully closing the door behind her. As she approached the door at her end of the car, she saw the conductor leap to the platform as the train came to a stop and rush into the station. She quickly dropped off the train on the other side, stepped behind some cars that were standing on a side track and waited. In a moment Conductor Sherley came from the station, sprang into the car—re-appeared almost instantly to wave his hand to the engineer—and the train moved on.

When Virginia noticed the name of the city, she recalled that in a small town not many miles from here was the home of a friend and classmate, Mary Cardwell; and her plan was, if she succeeded in escaping from the train unseen, to seek her friend and persuade her to keep her in seclusion till her father might have time to think over the matter more calmly and become more reasonable. She realized that for the success of her plan she would better not be seen by the employes at the station, and so she started across the railroad yards hoping to reach a street in that direction. Threading her way between rows of cars, she had nearly reached a street, when as she stepped from behind a big freight car, she stepped onto the track of an approaching switch engine only a few feet away. The engineer saw her at the same time, and the fearful shriek from the monster mingled with the crash of hastily applied brakes seemed to freeze her blood in her veins. But only for an instant. Thanks to her athletic training at College she had learned to think and act quickly. Without hesitating an instant she gave a tremendous leap ahead, cleared the track and was safe. When it was all over her strength left her and she was so weak she could hardly stand. Her face was almost as white as the handkerchief she held to it, and one not knowing her intimately, would hardly have recognized her as Virginia Warner.

The first person she met was a sturdy Irishman, clad in overalls—evidently a railroad man. She approached him and inquired how far it was to the village of Colton and how she could get there. "Is it to Colton ye be wantin' to go? Yes ma'am, I kin tell ye that it's upwards of nine mile—too far for the likes o' ye to be walkin! Go up here two blocks and take a Roseville car—that's the green one—and it will take ye right there." "Dr. Cardwell? Yis ma'am, I know him. 'Twas him that pulled little Patsey through the measles—and a fine man he is, too. Get off the first time the car turns beyond Colton and there ye be—right at the doctor's gate. Ye can't miss it."

Thanking the man for the information, Virginia walked on up the street, was soon aboard the green car, and in due time reached the corner. As she alighted from the car, she saw the sign of Dr. Cardwell suspended from a pole in front of a gate from which a walk led to a house among the trees some distance from the street.

The house was an old fashioned rambling affair—plainly showing the various additions that had been built from time to time—with big porches and stately columns, and gave every appearance of comfort and content. It was in a large yard filled with gigantic oaks, elms, and maples over which climbed Virginia creepers, ivy and wild grape vines in rich profusion. It was such a country home as one would expect to find in the South rather than in Indiana, but it had been in the Cardwell family for several generations and each had tried to add something to its beauty. The very atmosphere of the place seemed to be restful, and its whole appearance to bid a welcome to any one desirous of escaping from care of trouble.

As Virginia approached the house, she saw someone in a hammock some distance to the left—another look told her it was her friend, and, leaving the walk, she had nearly reached the hammock before being discovered.

Mary Cardwell had been Virginia's intimate chum at Vassar. She was two years her senior—tall, slender, and graceful, with light hair and blue eyes. Opposites are sometimes strangely drawn to each other and it was so in this case. Virginia was quick, impulsive, masterful, and could frequently carry her point by her very force of character. Mary was more quiet, gentle, persuasive, and the pleading look in her eyes could sometimes accomplish more than Virginia's forceful command. These two girls, so different in temperament, seemed each to find her counterpart in the other, and Virginia felt that fortune had indeed favored her at a time when she so much needed a friend, by placing her in the company of Mary Cardwell.

Hearing some one approaching, Mary looked up and after one look leaped from the hammock and running to her friend clasped her in her arms—"Why, Virginia Warner, you don't know how glad I am to see you, but what brings you here looking as if you had lost your last friend?—and you have been crying, too. Come sit down here in the hammock and tell me all about it."

"Well, Mary, I do feel as if I had almost lost my last friend, but I have come to you and I want you to help me—so I suppose I must tell you all about it."

Seated in the hammock, clasped in each other's arms, the girls talked for a long time. After telling her story, Virginia said, "I cannot help but think that this matter having come to papa so suddenly, and being at variance with his plans has made him unjust and unreasonable. If I should disappear for a while and he have time to think it over, I am sure he will feel that he is wrong. I want you to keep me for a time and not let anyone know who I am."

"But Virginia, you don't suppose that the daughter of James Warner can disappear without the greatest efforts being put forth to find her?—the newspapers will be full of it, rewards will be offered, and someone will find you, even if for no other reason than to obtain the reward."

"Yes, Mary, I know all that, but you are the only soul in this neighborhood who knows me. I will take another name, and unless you tell, I do not believe any one will find out who I am. My middle name is Lockland—it was my mother's maiden name—and I will be Virginia Lockland, your schoolmate and you can so introduce me."

Mary was at last persuaded, even though she was not quite sure it was the wisest plan, and everything being arranged, the girls started for the house.

Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell were glad to welcome any friend of Mary's and the generous hospitality shown her seemed to make her forget her troubles, and she became again the jolly, companionable girl that Mary had known at Vassar.

The next morning as the girls entered the dining room, Dr. Cardwell was standing by a window reading the morning paper. He turned with a pleasant greeting but immediately called their attention to the glaring headlines on the front page of the paper. "Disappearance of an Heiress." "Daughter of a Railroad

President Disappears from a Special Train!" "Elopement or Suicide—Which?" "Police Unable to Find Clue." "$2,000.00 Reward." The doctor then read the article and the discussion became general. Thanks to her natural talents, Virginia was able to act her part well and to take some part in the discussion, but Mary, not feeling quite so sure of herself, attended strictly to her breakfast and said very little.

If Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell had any suspicions, from the actions of the girls, they kept them to themselves. Several days passed and Virginia had come to believe her hiding place secure. The newspapers, each day, contained articles regarding her disappearance, but they had been transferred from the front page to the inside of the paper—so quickly does a sensation lose its attraction when there is nothing new to add. The girls remained close at home—refusing several invitations from Dr. Cardwell to ride with him while making his calls—fearing that possibly they might meet someone knew Virginia.

At last, feeling less apprehension from the fact that nothing had happened they yielded to an urgent invitation from the doctor and went for a ride of several hours in the doctor's big automobile—spinning from one town to another over the beautiful graveled roads of Northern Indiana. It was late in the afternoon when they returned and Virginia went at once to her room to wash the dust from her face and hands and to re-arrange her turban braid with which the winds from old Lake Michigan had played havoc.

In about half an hour Mary came running upstairs greatly excited. A young man had just brought to her father's office a woman whom he had found at a grade crossing a short distance away and who was apparently badly injured. She was living, but unconscious, and had probably been unconscious for some time. The doctor did not know whether he could save her or not. There was not a hospital nearer than nine miles, and so she had been taken to a room in the other end of the house and her father was now dressing her wounds. The young man who brought the woman in his automobile, Mary described as being tall and handsome, and Virginia could not help but notice that she seemed very much impressed by his appearance. Finding there was nothing he cou'd do, he had gone away without even giving his name. All this and more Mary told—almost without stopping to take breath. She added that the doctor had telephoned to the city for a nurse, but until the nurse came she was to assist her father and must now hurry back to help him.

At dinner that evening Dr. Cardwell announced that the patient, though still unconscious, was doing as well as he could expect, and, unless there were internal injuries which he had not discovered, would rally shortly and soon be convalescent. The nurse had arrived and Mary was relieved from her duties, but could not relieve her mind from the excitement of the case. The injured woman was a stranger to them all, and the girls indulged in much speculation as to who she might be and the cause of her injuries.

The next forenoon, Mary being busy about the house, Virginia took a magazine from the library table, found a chair on the big porch at the side of the house, and was soon deeply interested in a story. A little later, hearing a step on the porch at the front of the house and thinking it was Mary, she arose and went to meet her. As she turned the corner of the house, she stopped short in astonishment, for she was standing face to face with George Thornton.

CHAPTER V.

"Miss Warner, this is an unexpected pleasure, I am very glad to meet you again. Are you visiting at Dr. Cardwell's?" said Mr. Thornton, as he shook hands with Virginia.

Poor Virginia was in distress of mind, and could not hide her embarrassment. "What was the best thing to do?" He must not call me Miss Warner." "I must make some explanation;" "I believe it will be best, as it always is, to tell the truth"—were the swift thoughts that rushed through her mind. But she said, "Won't you come over and sit down? I want to talk with you a little while."

So they sat down in the easy chairs on the wide porch, just out of the reach of the hot sun. It was an attractive spot, with its low wicker chairs and red rug, a hammock stretched from pillar to pillar, and a low stand with a bowl of fresh June roses. Attractive, too, was Virginia in her cool muslin dress, and her cheeks flushed from the sudden surprise, and a look in her eyes not quite so clear and happy as the girl he knew two years before.

"How little you have changed, Miss Warner. I could easily shut my eyes and believe myself afloat on the broad Atlantic. Do you know I read a strange thing in the morning paper a week or so ago. It was headed 'Disappearance of an Heiress—daughter of a railroad president;—elopement or suicide, which; $2,000.00 reward,' and on reading I found it to be Miss Warner."

"Now here you are. You haven't suicided, so I suppose you must have eloped. Suppose you trot out the happy man and let me see him, and by the way, what is to prevent my capturing you on the spot and claiming the $2,000.00 reward?" said Mr. Thornton with a jolly twinkle in his eye.

"Oh, Mr. Thornton," said Virginia, looking troubled, "I was afraid you might have seen that, and any way whether you had or had not I wanted to explain how I happened to be here now that you have discovered me. I am in a sorry plight for I have quarreled with father, and Virginias eyes filled with tears. "I have long had a passion for the stage. There is nothing to do at home. Father is away a good deal and I don't seem to find much satisfaction in being alone so much with nothing to do.

"Father was not willing at all, and started with me for Chicago. He didn't say, but I had a well defined idea that he intended to shut me up in a convent. There were other grievances, too, and we had some words on the train and the first chance I got I bolted. I left the train at South Bend, ran away I suppose you would call it, and came here to Mary. Now I am going to work. I always have had a sort of envy for the girl who was self-supporting—and I suppose she has envied me, with nothing to do but spend the money with which father always supplied me so liberally.

"Mary's father and mother do not know who I am and I have taken the name of Lockland—my middle name. You are the first person I have seen who knows me and you must be sure to call me by it."

"Well, well, this is a surprising tale," responded Mr. Thornton. "When I began to joke you I had no idea there was even the shadow of a cause for the article in the paper. Your father always seemed to me to be more than ordinarily devoted to his daughter, I thought."

"Oh, he was" said poor Virginia, "but he has a strong will and is not used to being thwarted. Unfortunately I have one too, or a good deal of stubbornness or something. Father wished to outline my life for me and decide some things which no one could decide but myself. So I am here and he is—I don't know where. I have my life to live and I think I should have something to say as to how I will live it."

"Well, I'm mighty sorry you're in trouble, Miss War—— Miss Lockland," said Mr. Thornton, looking very sympathetic, "and if I can help you out in your dilemma, please let me know. You do not suppose for a minute your father is ignorant of your whereabouts? I think he knew not many hours after your disappearance."

Just then around the corner came Mary, looking as dainty and sweet as the viol ts tucked in her belt. She was quite amazed to see Virginia chattering away to the young stranger whom she had tried to describe to her a few days before.

"Mary, you see I did not wait for an introduction to Mr. Thornton. I met him on the porch, and such was my joy at seeing a young man, after being buried from the outside world so long, that I captured him, dragged him to this corner, and here I've kept him for at least twenty minutes."

"The chains you may imagine, Miss Cardwell, have not been heavy. In fact, I nearly forgot that I was on your front porch, but imagined myself on a steamer in mid-ocean," said Mr. Thornton.

"Poor Mary looks more and more mystified," said Virginia. "Mary, I became quite well acquainted with Mr. Thornton two years ago when I returned from Europe. He was on the steamer and helped to save father and me from an untimely death the night of the awful wreck. So we have been talking over old times."

"Miss Cardwell," said Mr. Thornton, "how do you manage to exist in this berg?"

"Why, I lead the happiest kind of a life. A quiet life suits me best. Of course there isn't a mad whirl and continued excitement, but I have my books and music, and some very nice friends even here. Then I help mother, and ride with father, and sometimes am fortunate enough to have my college chums to visit me."

"It seems to me the deadest town," said Mr. Thornton, "worse than dead, it's petrified and moss-grown. You can walk through it from one end to the other and see nothing more animated, than a cow fletcherizing on the green grass or a flock of ducks on the pond. It would be an act of kindness if you young ladies would help to lift this gloom that's settling on me. The boating is fine on the river, and I have a chum whom I'm visiting. He would like nothing better, I can vouch for him as well as myself, than to take you out for a couple of hours tomorrow evening. If we call at 6:30 that would not make it late."

"We will be delighted I'm sure," said Virginia, looking at Mary, "and w can row if you want any help, for we belonged to the Vassar crew."

"We'll pray for fair weather tomorrow then," said Mr. Thornton, as he rose to take his departure.

"Oh, by the way, I almost forgot what I came for. It was to ask after the mysterious lady I picked up the other day. I think I know who she is, but perhaps she has regained consciousness so as to speak for herself."

"Yes—she is dazed still," answered Mary, "but she asked for Lois this morning. The nurse asked, 'Where is Lois?' She said, 'Why at the settlement.' Then she said to her, 'Shall we send for her?' She answered, 'Yes.' So the nurse wrote a note telling about the accident, and asking her to come. Then she said to her, 'I've forgotten the address—Where shall I send the letter?' 'To Lois Bennett, Northwest Settlement, Chicago,' she said."

"Well, that agrees with what I heard," said Mr. Thornton. "Some people living in the poor quarter over by the railroad said there had been a lady there from the settlement in Chicago that day, and one of the children said the lady got hurt by a runaway team, near the crossing. I hope the mystery will soon be cleared up. Good morning."

George Thornton chuckled to himself as he went down the street, to think of the fun he would have with Harry when he reached home.

"By Jove," he said, as he came in, "but we're a pair of lucky dogs. I've made a discovery; found two stunning Vassar girls—and we're to take them out rowing tomorrow evening at 6:30. What do you think of your uncle now? I've been trying all the way down the street to decide on which one shall fall to my lot. Guess it better be the black-eyed one seeing I've known her longest. I met her on ship-board when I came home from Europe. You may have the other.

'With eyes so blue
And heart so true
That none with her compare.' "

he sang in high spirits.

"Who is she? Miss Cardwell?" said Harry, "I've heard of her."

"Yes," said George, "and we'll show them the best time that they have seen lately—for the next two weeks, if they'll let us. There is boating tomorrow, and we can take auto rides and picnics, and that front porch will be like an oasis in a desert. I have visions of fudge, rarebits, and chafing dish suppers."

" 'This is the way I long have sought,
And mourned because I found it not.' "

"I suspect when you leave they will both be inconsolable," said Harry, "and go around singing,

'What's this dull town to me?

Robin's not here.' "

"Of course," said George, "they'll both be dead in love, and I won't dare take either one for fear of breaking the other's heart."

"How about your own?" said Harry. "It may happen to be the other way. In fact, I was wondering if it wasn't a little cracked from that earlier experience. Ship-board is a great place for love affairs, I've heard."

"Well it might have been a little cracked then, but it's sound as a top now," tapping his broad chest, "and in no further danger—that was in my younger days."

"Well, it's time for me to go back to business now," said Harry, "but I'll be ready for a frolic to-morrow night."

The next day dawned bright and clear, and was a full one at Dr. Cardwell's. In the first place, Mrs. Cardwell came out with her hat on to join her husband at the gate. Her kindly smile always warmed the heart of the motherless Virginia. "I am going to the city with papa, Mary," she said, "and we won't be back until after dinner. Put the finishing touches to the table, and cure the sick and heal the wounded for papa if there should be any." "Goodby, mother," said Mary, getting up and giving her a kiss. "Goodby, mother," said Virginia, following suit. With a happy laugh, "Goodby, my two daughters," said Mrs. Cardwell, with an added tenderness for the girl.

While the girls busy themselves at home we will go with the doctor and wife to South Bend where they drew up at the hotel St. Nicholas and were shown to room 41. They knocked at the door, which was opened at once and they met by appointment the president of the Great American Railway. "Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell, I presume," he said, as he ushered them in and asked them to be seated.

Mrs. Cardwell was dumb with astonishment. She knew her husband had an appointment to meet a man on business, but she did not know why she was dragged into it or what the business was. An unusual woman it must be admitted if she could ride the distance of nine miles from Colton to the city without having ferreted out that matter, but such was actually the case.

"I suspect you wonder why you are called here, Mrs. Cardwell, and I will explain at once. I believe you have a young lady at your home by the name of Miss Lockland. Her real name is Warner—Virginia Lockland Warner, and I am her father, James Warner. I presume you have seen the press notices in regard to her disappearance—notices I have endeavored to suppress, but 'murder will out.' Of course it was only a short time until I knew the whereabouts of my daughter. We made but one stop after I saw her last. I sent a detective there. He soon found an Irishman who had directed her to your house. But I have done nothing further about it, for to tell the truth I do not know what is the best move to make,"—and the man who was the head of great corporations, who was used to sweeping aside all obstacles that blocked his way, whose keen judgment was sought for on the great topics of his day, had reached a problem of a new sort, where all his knowledge of the management of great railroads, his power as a great financier, did not count a pennyweight. The intricacies of a woman's mind, the power of a woman's will even though she is only a slip of a girl of twenty, had baffled him.

If he had but used a little tact, had shown her a little of the tenderness and love of which his heart was full, doubtless her soft arms would have been round his neck, the fair young cheek against his, and she would have said, "I shall do only as you think best, father dear, and all would have been clear sailing. Herein lies a lesson for all who are of the masculine persuasion: If you want your own way, as a MAN always does that is the way to get it.

"Mrs. Cardwell," said Mr. Warner, "I sent for you because I thought I needed a woman's advice, and because I wished to know how Virginia is bearing up under this. I think if her mother had lived she would have known how to prevent this breach. I presume she has told you her side of the story?—No?"

So Mr. Warner told the story over, not forgetting to state that he had proposed marrying her to a young man he thought would be suitable. "I thought I was simply doing a father's duty by her to try to get her well settled, but she flew all to pieces," he said.

Mrs. Cardwell gave a little smile at that, and said, "If there is ever a question which a woman thinks she has an undisputed right to decide, it is whom she will have for a husband. If I wanted Mary to marry any certain young man, I should endeavor to have him at the house occasionally and give them every chance to become better acquainted, and then wait and see. However, I think that will be a matter in which I shall never interfere, unless she should choose a man that her father and I know is of questionable character or one who we are certain can not make her happy. Then we shall endeavor to make her see it. There is a time when we have 'nothing to say. Nothing to say.' "

"Perhaps that is where I made one mistake" said Mr. Warner meekly. "Now home isn't home without her, Mrs. Cardwell. Now do you suppose you could talk with her as a mother would, and help her to see the thing in a different light? Of course she can stay with you but a short time. She has only a few clothes, and but little money—perhaps a matter of a hundred dollars or so."

"This is certainly a sorrowful state of affairs. I will do all I can for you," said Mrs. Cardwell, "but Virginia has not confided in me, although I have grown to love her more and more every day. She is a girl of spirit, and though I have noticed a troubled look in her eyes, when she is quiet, yet she can always throw it off and become the life of the house. I will make an effort to get her confidence, but unless she talks to me of her own free will, I feel that it would not be wise for me to broach the subject. She has said this to me, that she was anxious to earn her own living, and I think she is considering the ways and means. I believe the best thing you could do, if you really want my advice is to let her try it, and wait for her to turn to you again as she is sure to do sooner or later. She has always been so sheltered and shielded, perhaps it will be a good thing for her to find out what sort of a world it really is. She sent down for some goods and is going to try making herself a dress.

These lessons will be good for her, and I am sure she will not forget her father even though she gives no sign for a time."

After a little further conversation, Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell took their departure, but not until they had promised to write to him soon. "I thank you," said Mr. Warner, as he shook hands with them at parting, "It is a comfort to know Virginia is so well cared for at present."

While the good doctor and his wife were away, the girls were having busy times at home. Virginia brought out her new white lawn and the pattern, but she had but a few minutes to devote to it, for the door bell rang and in a short time Mary came in to tell her the news: "Our caller is Miss Bennett from the Northwest Settlement and the injured lady is one of her settlement workers, Miss Rhinehart. It seems that one of their boys whom they are looking after got into some trouble which put him in the lockup and he was anxious for some of them to come out here to see his mother. So this Miss Rhinehart came. As she had intended to visit her people, before returning to Chicago, those of the Settlement had not thought it strange that they did not hear from her. So the mystery is cleared up. Now I have to see about dinner and don't you want to entertain her for a few minutes? She is lovely and you will enjoy her."

"All right," said Virginia, putting away her dress and pattern. "I'll go out on the porch. I was just at the point of despair. How can I tell which gore goes where, and whether I am to cut one or two or how many of these pieces?" So she went out on the porch where Mary brought out and introduced the newcomer.

"I am so much interested in your work," said Virginia in the course of the conversation. "I never knew much about it until I was in Vassar. There each class had to have its day in settlement work. I never did enjoy but one thing more." "What was that?" said Miss Bennett, "The amateur theatricals. I was quite carried away with that." "No wonder," said Mary, who had just come out, "she was always the star on those occasions. Always carried the leading part, and coached the rest of us in ours."

"I wish you lived in Chicago where you could help us," said Miss Bennett. "We are so much in need of some one who can do that very thing, for you know we have little plays for our people quite often."

"I wish that I could," said Virginia thoughtfully, "but you do not pay any salaries and I shall have to be self-supporting from now on."

"We would give you board and room, and there is often a chance to coach outside parties, dramatic clubs, or ladies who want to entertain their husbands or high school students, which would pay you something. It will be a long time before Miss Rhinehart is able to return, and we need some one so much. If you care to try it, I will be glad to have you."

"I don't know," said Virginia, "I want to take lessons in dramatic art and I don't know whether I could combine the two or not. I want to prepare myself for the stage."

"I think you will have time, but when you become interested in our work, and see how much good you can do there, I believe you will stay with us. They are God's poor and ours," said Miss Bennett, gently.— "Well, I won't say positively until I've considered it a little longer," said Virginia, rising to go in.

She was restless and unsettled, thinking the matter over pro and con, and was no nearer a decision when her watch pointed to five. "I'm no nearer deciding this than I was before," said Virginia to herself, "and it's time to get ready for boating tonight. Away, dull care, and let me have a gay lark tonight, for I may not have many more such chances if I go to work."

Supper was soon over, and as they went out to the porch, they caught a glimpse of white flannels through the trees. "Here they are," said Mary, and we are going now. Mamma, we'll be in early. Goodby."

CHAPTER VI.

The girls tripped lightly across the lawn to meet the young men approaching them. Mr. Thornton introduced his friend, Harry Harriman, and at once unfolded to them their plans for the evening. They were to take the rowboat on the river to Lake Michigan, a short distance away, where Mr. Harriman's yacht was lying at anchor off the wharf and would spend the evening on the yacht.

They took the boat and were soon at the mouth of the river. The rowboat was secured at the wharf, and in response to a signal from the owner of the yacht, a boat was lowered and two of the yachting skippers put to shore to take the party aboard.

It was a beautiful evening. In the west a gorgeous sunset, the golden glories of the dying day illuminated the heavens, while in the opposite horizon appeared a silver moon, and they reveled in the double splendor of both luminaries. The yacht, that beautiful "swallow of the sea"—and inanimate nature can show nothing more beautiful,—nodding and rocking to the uudulatory music of the waves, caught the ruddy tints, the oranges and the crimsons of the sunset and threw them back across the sparkling waters of the lake.

They stepped into the boat and were soon aboard. The anchor was weighed and they were off, gliding over the beautiful waters of Lake Michigan, like a sea gull in its flight, to a ten-knot breeze, enjoying to their utmost the undulating motion of the vessel as it sped along its course.

They met the captain, the boatswain, the cook, the steward, and the jolly skippers. Their attention was directed to the vessel, so perfect in all its appointments, with all the luxury and magnificence that designers, cabinetmakers, upholsterers and decorators could devise—so homey, so cozy and comfortable, a "floating cottage" on the sea. They examined with interest the deck and the cabin, the sails and the rigging, the anchor and the cables, the boats and the life preservers.

The captain, a gentlemanly fellow, reserved and dignified, had gained by long and varied experiences at sea, those indispensable gifts of nerve; quickness of eye, and promptitude of judgment so necessary to meet the emergencies that frequently fall to the lot of one in charge of a ship at sea.

They were told of the cook who could prepare the most appetizing and elaborate menu on his one little stove for any number of guests, and how the steward would valet half a dozen, always cheerful, painstaking, and obliging. He tides the cabin, makes the beds, and washes the dishes—but never grumbles.

The boatswain, a man of great courage, skill and experience, was at the wheel. They noticed that he had a grave and preoccupied air. He was watching the barometer, which tonight was depressed and continues rapidly to descend.

The jolly party made merry with their witty sayings and repartee and gave themselves over to the abandon of a good time.

Soon their attention was directed to the unusual action of the crew. They were hurrying here and there at the commands of their superior officer, and all was bustle and confusion. On looking back to the northwest over the starboard quarter, they saw that the once placid waters of the lake were lashed into a mass of white foam. A hurricane was rushing upon them with a force and velocity that was alarming to behold and they found themselves at once into the grandeur, the terror, and the horror of a storm at sea.

The crew in the meantime were reducing the sail and preparing to meet the shock and fury of the blast. The boatswain maneuvered the craft and luffed up close to the wind to guard against capsizing, but the force was so terrific that the staunch little vessel careened 'till the lee rail was entirely submerged.

The gentlemen of the party, both of them good sailors, were endeavoring to calm the fears of the ladies, and as a matter of precaution they were each supplied with life preservers in preparation for any emergency.

Dr. Cardwell came home after a hard day's work with trying cases. He threw himself into a hammock on the veranda. His wife who was seated in a chair nearby, was sewing. They talked of the labors of the day that was drawing to a close, of their visit to Mr. Warner, and of Virginia's attitude toward her father.

This being their wedding anniversary, their thoughts naturally reverted to the past, of the time twenty-five years ago when as a young graduate he brought his youthful bride to this old rambling house that had been the home of the Cardwells for years. They were young, ambitious, and full of hope for the future.

His preparation for his life work was abundant, and nature had dealt lavishly with him in natural gifts and personal magnetism. He read human nature as an open book. His heart and soul, his very life was given up to the cure of disease and to the relief of human suffering. He was a man of high ideals and he fought evil as he fought disease, and he loved right living as he loved "God's antiseptic sunshine." No appeal for help was ever turned aside. To him the father came with his anxieties, the mother with hidden grief, the daughter with her trials, and the son with his follies. He was always ready to respond to the call of the sick and suffering. Many a dark and stormy night he had left the warmth and comforts of home to answer the call of some poor sufferer. "The Lord's poor, the devil's poor, or poor devils," were all the same to him, knowing full well that the only pay he would receive would be "thank you, doctor;' but he drew his pay from the great fund of contentment and satisfaction of a duty well performed, and felt that peace which only a lonely physician can feel. Fully one-fourth of his work was entered upon other books than his own, but he drew his pay.

They talked of Mary, their only child, and of the night soon after her birth when in response to the call of the night-bell, a plaintive wail was heard and search revealed a covered basket on the door step, and in it a baby boy, clothed in apparel such as only people of wealth and good taste could provide. A coat and hood of finest silk and wool, with dress and skirts of sheerest linen, a blanket heavily embroidered in silk, in one corner of which was the monogram "R. W." They took the little stranger into their hearts and lives and loved him as their own, but had never been able to unravel the mystery of his identity, although every effort was made to establish a clew. They named him Raymond Wayne to conform to the initials of the monogram. They nurtured him with tender care and he developed into a sturdy youth, was carefully trained and educated as their own child, in school and high school, and then at Harvard, where he received his degree and later was graduated in medicine, and the year just past had been spent in the hospitals and clinics of Europe. He was now expected home at any time.

As they were talking of him and of his expected return they heard a quick step on the walk leading from the street to the house and he was with them again. They greeted him with affection. They plied him with innumerable questions regarding his voyage and of the past year of separation and as they visited together—father, mother and adopted son—their attention was directed to the west where Halley's comet, its long tail sweeping away to the left, had just come into view high in the heavens and were surprised to note the appearance of an approaching storm. They talked of the peril of those on the lake, and in their anxiety they got into their motor car and hastened to the pier.

On their arrival, the storm was at its height and in the distance they saw the yacht floundering and being driven towards the shore. They watched the efforts to maneuver the vessel to avoid capsizing. They looked with breathless anxiety at monstrous wave on wave, each one of which seemed destined to engulf or capsize the yacht. At length when near the shore the vessel was seen to careen in response to the impact of a gigantic wave, and to their horror the figure of a woman in white was seen to dash overboard into the boiling, seething waters of the lake.

Dr. Cardwell and Raymond, both expert oarsmen, the later having been the leading stroke on the 'varsity crew, sprang into the row-boat that was secured to the pier earlier in the evening and now lashed by the fury of the storm, and launched into the turbulent waters, the boat riding the mountainous billows like an egg shell in the face of the storm. The lady overboard proved to be Virginia, the life preserver having kept her afloat and the storm carrying her rapidly towards the shore. With the powerful strokes and bending oars they were able to make some advance and Raymond, dropping his oars and throwing off his coat, plunged into the lake and with vigorous strokes reached the now almost unconscious girl, and with one arm around her, grasped the boat with the other hand as Dr. Cardwell drew to their side and assisted them into the boat. With some difficulty they effected a landing and at once endeavored to resuscitate the now unconscious girl, while they watched with intense anxiety the yacht as it was buffeted by the storm. Their efforts were rewarded by Virginia's return to consciousness; and the yacht which was manfully battling with the receding storm, soon righted herself and for a time they lay-to on starboard tack, and as the fury of the storm abated, they were enable to make a landing, to the joy of the anxious friends on shore.

CHAPTER VII.

The members of the yachting party were hurried to their homes where immediate attention was given them. The girls were put to bed, covered warmly, and given hot drinks to revive hearts and spirits. George and Harry, after assuring themselves that the girls were not in serious condition, hastened to their own home, there to exchange wet garments for comfortable dry ones. Good Mrs. Cardwell had extracted a promise from them that they would use all means to prevent any serious results to their constitutions from the shock of their thorough drenching. The boys meekly promised, and after reaching home, Harry, with mock officiousness, filled the hot water bottle, fixed up brandy and water, and brought them to George.

"There, my dear George, of the delicate constitution, if you heed all of these tender preparations I have made to preserve your feeble life, there is a possibility we may prolong it for a few hours more."

George listened with amused tolerance, then picking up the hot-water bottle hurled it at Harry's head, following it up with a couple of sofa pillows.

"Better look after your own constitution, especially that part of your anatomy commonly known as the heart, for upon my soul, man, I've never seen you, the cynical Harry, so captivated by a pair of brilliant black eyes and cherry red lips as you were this evening."

Harry looked grave. "George," he said, "all jokes aside, Miss Lockland comes nearer being my ideal of a beautiful woman than any one I have ever met. True, I know her but little, but if her heart is as good as she is beautiful, I could wish to seek no further for complete happiness."

George had felt himself honor-bound not to reveal, even to Harry, Virginia's true name, and wasn't it just as fair for one as for the other?—for the Harry Harriman who was so fascinated by Virginia was none other than Harry Holcomb, the son of "Grandpa Tom," the man whom, above all others, she felt she had reason to despise and abhor.

Harry's father had married late in life, but after a few years his wife died leaving a babe scarce a year old. His favorite sister had married a titled Englishman, and she persuaded her brother to let her have the little fellow. She took him to England there to rear him amid the aristocracy, and with a view to adopting him; but Mr. Holcomb still clung to his child, and as Harry grew older he developed that active independence of sturdy American manhood which would brook no dawdling English indolence. In his father's frequent visits he had become well acquainted with American manners and methods, and knew his father's business from a to z—theoretically if not practically.

After being graduated from college, his aunt had tried again to interest him in society, and to persuade him that a brilliant marriage was the goal to seek. But the call of the blood was in his veins, and he longed to be one of the busy, rushing throng which ever crowd our cities. So he bade adieu to England and came to America.

One day, after a long and animated conversation with his father in the latter's office, Mr. Holcomb rose and said, "Well, Harry, I presume I must accede to your request, since you insist; but why you should want to begin at the bottom and go under an assumed name, when you could begin at my side, is a mystery to me."

"I suppose it does seem odd to you father," said Harry, "but all my life you have talked of how young America can rise from the lowest to the highest place, and all my life you have told how the common people are just as noble and courageous as the wealthy classes. In England this has been sneered at, and I've been told it was a huge joke; but inwardly, I have always wanted to put it to the test; and if I don't do so now, I'll never have another chance; and if I do not do this, I will probably retain some of the ideas bred into me by my dear old aunt; and if I ever hold the position which you now occupy, and which it is your one desire that I attain, how can I truly sympathize with my vast army of workmen. I wish to use another name than yours to avoid toadyism from my superiors, and to win promotion on my own merits. Father, we are all born free and equal over here; and I want to know my men, their lives, their hearts, their hopes, and their ambitions. It is my belief that a corporation will succeed better if it treats each of its workmen as a human individual, who has his hopes and aspirations, with his sorrows and his joys locked up in his bosom, the same as we have, and I want to prove it."

"Tut, tut, boy, of course a man's a man, and no doubt he loves and grieves as we do, but a corporation must look to the product of the whole, not to the smiles and tears of every John and Bill in its employ. But learn your lesson in your own way, my son, I'm glad enough to have you with me."

And so it was settled, and thus it happened that Harry Holcomb was Harry Harriman to his American friends. It was agreed that he should enter the Overland shops at Chicago, and work up from the lowest round of the ladder. Harry had met George while the latter was abroad, and at their first meeting on American soil, he had explained his position to George, who, being risen from the lowly himself, encouraged his friend in his project.

At the time our story opens, Harry had been going to and from his work on the interurban, and on the evening when George had proposed taking the girls out on the water, the boys had spent some time planning how they would secure Mr. Holcomb's yacht and show the girls the time of their lives, agreeing to say nothing about whose yacht it was, if no questions were asked, but fixing up a plausible story of a "friend in need is a friend indeed," should the girls become inquisitive.

They now sat discussing the disappointing outcome of their pleasure trip. They spoke of Raymond's bravery in rescuing Virginia, and George chaffed Harry unmercifully about his dangerous rival. Harry agreed that a dangerous rival was all right in his place, and would probably cause George as much trouble as himself.

"Speaking of ideal womanhood," George said, "I think I very much prefer the gentle Mary to your vivacious, black-eyed Virginia. Time once was when I had almost lost my heart to your Juno, but now, I say, give me the Madonna face and sweet spirit of my Mary. She is an artist's dream, 'with eyes so blue, and heart so true,' as but yesterday I sang so happily. Methinks her little hands were just made to smooth the lines of care from a weary painter's brow." "By the way," he continued, "she was telling me a bit of romance in Miss Lockland's life. It seems as though her father is very wealthy, and has made an attempt to marry her off to some titled foreigner. Miss Virginia with a dash and vim has taken the bit in her teeth and bolted. She is down here on a little visit with Miss Cardwell, until she can bring the old fellow to time, or finds something to do. She is now considering settlement work, and really wants to earn a living in the good old way, by hard honest work. She has spirit enough, but I doubt if she could withstand the horror and vileness which she would encounter in settlement work."

Harry had been looking thoughtful, and as George ended exclaimed, "Marry her off to some foreign snob does he?—the old idiot. I'd like to see the fellow he has picked out for her. I can just imagine him—thin, cadaverous, with a sickening drawl; after her money; lead her a life of torment—she'd pine away and die. Oh, I've seen 'em, scores of them, with their monocles and patronizing ways. Ugh! it makes me sick to think of her fresh young lips being polluted by the kiss of such snakes of the earth,"—and he strode up and down the room with vehemence.

"Zounds, man," said George, but you are piratical. You needn't tear up and down like a caged tiger; he hasn't got her yet."—

"No, and by heavens, neither shall he ever get her if I can help it, and there's my good right hand on it. You'll help me to save her, old boy, won't you?"

George, suddenly grown serious, clasped his friend's hand in a hearty grip, and then and there two strong souls pledged themselves to save Virginia Lockland from the obnoxious foreigner.

Mary and Virginia were so excited and exhausted by their adventure, and were nursed so assiduously that they both forgot to ask who it was that saved Virginia from a watery grave.

Early the next morning Mrs. Cardwell entered Mary's room and after embracing and kissing her, asked if she knew who it was that had rescued Virginia. "Why, no, mama, in fact I was so frightened that I don't believe it has occurred to me to wonder how or by whom Virginia was rescued." Mrs. Cardwell sat on the edge of the bed and gave Mary the story in detail, only withholding the name of the hero who plunged into the water for Virginia.

"O, the brave, noble man! How much I admire his courage, and how I long to thank him for his deed. Tell me, mama, who it is, for he can never, never know the debt of gratitude we owe him."

My dear, your 'brave, noble man' as you call him is none other than your own brother, Raymond, who arrived after you girls left, and who was most anxious that we go to the wharf to look for you."

Mary's delight knew no bounds, for she loved her brother dearly. She insisted upon seeing him at once, so hurriedly dressed and went out to him. Putting her arms about his neck, she laid her cheek against his and told him over and over again of how proud she was of her dear big brother.

Virginia did not escape so easily from her experience as did Mary, for while not injured, her nerves were badly shaken, and the doctor thought it best for her to remain in bed for a few days.

George and Harry came over the next morning to inquire after the girls. They met Raymond and told him of their appreciation of his bravery as only men can do.

Dr. Cardwell had telephoned Mr. Warner of the accident, and he decided to come over at once. The doctor apprised Virginia of this fact, telling her also of their meeting her father the day before, but assuring her that they loved her dearly and would always protect her as a daughter.

Mr. Warner came down the next day and there was an affectionate meeting between father and daughter. He proposed taking Virginia home with him as soon as she was able to travel, but she had found such peace in Dr. Cardwell's home, and was still so unsettled as to her future career, that she begged to be allowed to remain. Mrs. Cardwell and Mary joined their pleadings to Virginia's, until her father finally consented to her spending the summer with them, saying he would have her trunks sent to her and drop down often to see her. Virginia was delighted, and said she knew she would now recover rapidly. After several days she was able to sit out on the porch, where she drank in health and sunshine, which soon brought the roses to her cheeks, and a happy light to her eyes.

One evening, about a week after the storm, Virginia was sitting in her accustomed chair, when her father came up the walk and sat down beside her. "How is my little girl today?" he said, fondly patting her cheek. "O, so much better, papa, and almost happy, but O, papa, such an awful thought has come into my mind just today. I don't know why I've never thought of it before. You know Mr. Harriman, of whom I have spoken several times? He has been so nice to me since the accident, coming over every evening and bringing me flowers when I know it must take almost every cent he earns."

"Yes, yes, but who is this young Harriman who causes you so much trouble? I've never heard of him."

"Mr. Thornton says he is a young man who is now in a moderate position, but who will some day make his mark in the world. Really, papa, he is nice, even if he is poor, and what worries me is that I am going under an assumed name. He is so straightforward and honest that I believe he will hate me all the rest of his life if he discovers how false I am. Papa, I just can't bear to think of his criticism,—and dearie, won't you just—won't you please let me introduce you as Mr. Lockland?"

" 'Mr. Lockland,' I let you introduce me as Lockland, Virginia, you must be mad, I cannot think of it."

"But, papa, only just this once. How can I let him know what I've done? Please, dady, it will never hurt, for soon we will go away; our lives will be different from his, and we will never meet again. It means so much to me now, probably because I am ill that I exaggerate the crime, but I do so want you to. Please do, papa."

"Virginia, anything within reason would meet with my approval, but don't you see that this is out of all bounds of possibility? Why, I with the name that stands for so much power in this country, to even allow myself to pass as another for ten minutes, is something to which I will never, never consent. I'll—Eh?"

Just then Virginia put her fingers over his lips, for turning the corner of the house was Harry Harriman. Before Mr. Warner could realize what was happening, Viginia was saying, "Mr. Harriman, my father." Harry extended his hand saying, "Mr. Lockland, this is indeed a pleasure." Mr. Warner unconsciously grasped the extended hand, saying, "Eh, Lockland did you say?—er, yes, yes—nice name—well, bless my soul, Mr. Harriman, glad to meet you," and he strode abruptly away, while Virginia dimpled and smiled and was absolutely happy because she had gained her point and because she had detected a preceptible twinkle in her father's eyes at being outwitted by a chit of a girl.

Miss Rhinehart, the injured girl who had been staying at Dr. Cardwell's was also recovering rapidly, her injuries not proving so serious as at first supposed. The doctor thought it best for her to remain in Colton during the heated term, so she sent for her mother, and they were soon comfortably established with an elderly couple who lived next door to Dr. Cardwell's.

Mrs. Rhinehart was a woman born of an aristocratic family, but very poor. Her associates had always been among the wealthy classes, and it had been a constant strain upon her to keep up appearances. At much self-sacrifice and with shrewd scheming, she had managed to educate her daughter, Ellen, at a fashionable woman's college, hoping that she would make a brilliant marriage, thus giving both mother and daughter the position in society which the former so much desired. But Ellen had become so fascinated with settlement work while at college that upon graduation she had entered the Northwest Settlement as an enthusiastic worker.

Mrs. Rhinehart was so disappointed at this turn of affairs, that she was even more embittered with life. She sarcastically told her daughter that the terrible accident she had met with and which ended her settlement work for the time being was an act of divine providence. Especially she thought so when, on coming to Colton, she found three eligible young men, upon one of whom she might fasten her talons and capture for her daughter. After shrewdly surveying the situation, she saw in George Thornton a prospective son-in-law which would revive her asistocratic spirits and fulfil her highest ambitions, and she lost no opportunity to urge her daughter to win him if possible.

Ellen's health continued to improve and in a few weeks she was able to join the other young people in many of their home pleasures and outings. She felt that as she had disappointed her mother so much in earlier life that she would now try to make amends by being amiable to Mr. Thornton and ended by finding herself hopelessly in love with him. In conversation with her mother, she confessed her love for George, but that he had eyes, ears, and heart for no one but Mary; and she now expressed a determination to return to settlement work as soon as her health permitted. Mrs. Rhinehart was furious and did everything in her power to compel Ellen to remain and win George if possible. But Ellen, never presuming, and now more diffident than ever, preferred to nurse her disappointment in silence.

George and Mary were, by common consent, thrown together almost constantly. George's admiration for Mary had continued to grow as time went on, until he knew that life without her would hold little pleasure for him, but while she liked him and was fond of his society, still he felt that, as yet, he had no right to believe that she did or would ever reciprocate his affection.

Raymond Wayne immediately entered into practice with Dr. Cardwell, and took great delight in lift-ing some of the burden from his foster father's shoulders. When but a child, he had often questioned why it was that his name was Wayne and his sister's, Cardwell; but had been told by the doctor that when he was old enough he should know his story. So when he was ready for college, Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell told him his brief history and put into his hands the garments he had worn when found at their door. Raymond had looked at them thoughtfully, and carefully scrutinized the monogram on the blanket. The letters were peculiarly interwoven as though it might have been an original design, and used as a special mark of identity. He had since felt that he would never be happy until he had established his parentage whether it be for better or for worse.

Raymond had appeared restless during the summer, which only Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell had noticed. They would often catch a half sigh from his lips, and at times periods of deep depression. When questioned, he would laughingly reply that probably the duties of M. D. were resting heavily upon him.

One morning in early fall, he asked his foster parents for an interview which was immediately granted. Going to the study and seating themselves, Raymond began, "Father, Mother, I hardly know how to begin. I sometimes wonder if I am glad or sorry to tell you that I have a slight clue to my identity. That for which my heart has always longed may come to me now, but I wonder if I wish it. You have been more than father and mother to me, and no matter what I may find my parentage to be, either saint or villian, I shall always be the son you have devoted your lives to make me. But to my story. Do you remember 'Dutch Joe' and his mother who used to live in the little hut back of the saw mill? I remember how we boys used to be afraid to pass the old crone's house, and often have chills raced up and down my spine when I caught her piercing black eyes fixed upon me. Well, you remember, I stopped in New York for a few days, on my return from Europe, to study a peculiar case in one of the hospitals? One day, while going through the charity ward, I came upon an old withered-up woman, so feeble and emaciated she was but a shadow. The attendant merely remarked 'senility,' and we were passing on, when she suddenly reached out and grasped my hand like a vise, and whispered hoarsely, 'R. W., R. W., be that yer name?' I was startled but said, 'Yes, Raymond Wayne is my name.' She gave a cackle and asked if I remembered Granny Krable. Of course I did, and asked her what I could do for her. 'Nothin', nothin',' she said, 'but mebbe I could do somethin' fer you. Mebbe I could die easier. R. W. be yer letters ben't they? Well, my son Joe, has some papers which will give you more joy than they ever gave me. Ask him fer 'em. Show him this, and tell him that death has broken the seal,'—and she fumbled in her bosom and drew forth this little package. 'Tell Joe,' she continued, 'to help you find yer twin brother. Ye'd know him any where, for he is yer livin' image. I've seen him since I've been in New York.' These words had scarcely passed her lips when she fell back dead. The hospital records show no account of her, except she was found in a little hut alone and starving. No clue to Joe, nothing whatever but this little package, which contains a wedding ring and a locket. Engraved in the ring is, 'To Rose.' The locket, as you may see has the picture of a most beautiful young woman, and a lock of soft silky hair, and bears the monogram, R. W. interwoven in the same intricate design as that on the blanket of my babyhood."

"I thought I would return to New York to begin my investigation, after but a few days' visit with you, but 'man proposes and God disposes.' You remember the first evening of my arrival occurred the frightful accident, which ended so happily, but which none of us will ever forget, and I presume, according to all precepts of romance I should have fallen in live with the dashing Virginia. Instead, days and weeks have gone by and I find I am unable to tear myself away from my once dear little sister, Mary. What I've always thought to be sincere brotherly affection, has developed into the deep passionate love of a man. I feel, that as yet, she has but a sister's love for me, and I've seen with an aching heart, her growing interest in Mr. Thornton. I do not wish to stand in the way of her happiness, and I cannot offer her my hand and heart until I have ferreted out this mystery. Had this interview with Granny Krable never come up, I might have been satisfied to 'let the dead past bury its dead'; but now that I know some one in the world holds my secret, and that one of my flesh and blood is living, I shall not rest until I have fathomed the secret and found my brother. I have not told you this to ask you to intercede for me; but because you have the first right to my confidence, and because I must now go to New York to begin my search."

Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell were greatly astonished at Raymond's recital, but encouraged him to try to discover his parentage and locate his brother. They told him that nothing would please them better than that he and Mary should love each other; but said that this was a matter for the young people to decide between themselves, and acceded to Raymond's request that Mary be kept in ignorance of the matters they had just been discussing, and in a few days Raymond left for New York, there to solve the problem which so mystified him.

Virginia, radiant and healthy, was never so happy as during the summer spent at Dr. Cardwell's. Such days of close companionship with Mary and Ellen. She was intensely interested in household duties such as Mary had to perform, and she also employed the time to improve her college training in settlement work, for she still cherished the desire to enter the field, and Ellen was an enthusiastic supporter of the cause. But best of all such delightfully happy evenings when the six young people with Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell had sped away in autos over many miles of country roads to return home by the soft light of the moon, or if the weather forbade an outing, chafing dish suppers, games, and music were always at their command.

Virginia seemed to be content to drift, she knew not whither and she cared not where. She only knew that she was happy with Harry at her side, and when he was away she longed for his return. Thus July passed into August, the heat of August and September into the hazy gossamer days of October. Mr. Warner, entirely occupied with some gigantic scheme of enlarging his enterprise, was satisfied to have his daughter where he knew she was well taken care of, and where thoughts of the stage had never seemed to enter her brain.

One pleasant evening in early October, Virginia and Harry were sitting on the porch alone. Virginia was talking of her cherished plans to do settlement work, and said that she had about decided to take it up until she could see a path open for her future higher career.

Harry, looking at her as she talked so earnestly of the pity and misery of the poor, of which she knew so little, felt how helpless she would be in that hungry, seething mass of degenerate humanity. Leaning forward, his face pale and agitated from suppressed emotion, he said, "Miss Lockland, Virginia, I cannot bear to think of your risking your sweet young life in that polluted disease laden atmosphere. There are conditions and horrors in the slums of which you have never dreamt, and which, I feel, will leave a pain in your heart that years cannot efface."

"I wish that it were now in my power to say all that my heart prompts me to say, but I must repress my words, for the time is not yet here when I may freely speak. I too, have a problem to work out, a problem, which in my younger days, I was taught is ludicrous and untrue, but which, since I began my present work, I find to be the highest ideal of manhood. To be a worker—to be one of the thousands who cause this old world to surge forward with such leaps and bounds, even though the humblest mechanic who but drives a rivet, if duty well performed is sounded with every hammer stroke—is to be entitled to as much credit in the world of progress as is the president of the road, whose keen foresight and judgment have earned him his exalted station."

"I would have you believe that I am a man who cares little for wealth or power, yet feel it only justice to the one woman in the world to me that I wait until I can offer her a name to be proud of and a position as high as her own. Virginia, dear, I love you, and may I cling to a small thread of hope that some day I may not come in vain?"

A feeling of great joy came over Virginia. Now she knew why she had been so happy, why all the summer had been a long blissful dream. Harry loved her, and now she knew that she loved him. Yes, she could wait, wait for years, if he asked it, and let him solve his problem in his own brave, noble way; she would not question why. All this she told him and much more, and after he had gone, Virginia felt that never, never again could a cloud of sorrow cross her sky.

A few days afterward Mr. Warner came down to visit Virginia. Harry was with her, but left soon after Mr. Warner's arrival. As he walked down the path Virginia's eyes followed him with a happy light. Mr. Warner caught the look on her face, and it startled him. He said, "Virginia, my child, I do not like to see you so interested in this young Harriman. He may be all right, and from appearances is a good man, but I cannot consent to receive him into my home as a friend of my daughter. In fact, I will never look with favor upon any man until you have, at least, given Mr. Holcomb's son a chance.

"Harry Holcomb, papa, I just hate the name, but where is he anyway? If I must meet him, I should like to do so at once and have it over. I am so tired of being thrown at this idiotic Englishman's head that I feel I could strangle him. Where is he now that he allows you and his father to do his courting for him?"

"Virginia, neither Mr. Holcomb nor his son know anything of what I have said to you. It is an idea of my own which I know you will guard as closely as I. As to where Harry Holcomb is now, his father says he has some hair-brained ideas of moving among the poorer classes and learning their manners and customs."

"Yes, I can just imagine him going around Whitechapel, with his daintily clad feet and hands, stepping so high, and handling people's poor possessions so gingerly. If he could show himself a man like Mr. Harriman, he—" "Virginia," said Mr. Warner with rising anger, "I repeat my warning, I do not want you to become interested in this upstart, Harry Harriman, who has neither name nor position to offer you."

Virginia felt all the old stubborn spirit rising within her, and probably would have made angry retort, but just then Mary came up to say that they were all invited to a neighbor's for the evening, which both Mr. Warner and Virginia gladly accepted, for neither cared to repeat the scene on the special train.

Mrs. Rhinehart, sore, vexed, and disappointed at the turn her project had taken was jealous of every one about her. Virginia, with her happiness so apparent, had lately become her pet aversion, and she lost no opportunity to give a hidden taunt or covert sneer. She could be so cuttingly sarcastic, or so patronizingly gracious, that Virginia knew not which to fear the more, so in self defense, evaded her when possible.

Ellen had thought she would be able to return to work by the first of November, but instead came to her mother in tears, saying that the doctor had just told her that it would be a year or more before her health would be fully restored. Mrs. Rhinehart felt that she was the most abused woman in the world, and did not hesitate to tell Ellen as much. She accused her of having no pride, no ambition—she, Ellen Rhinehart, with the blue blood of centuries of aristocracy in her veins, to sit idly by and permit a weak, washed out country girl to win away a most desirable man, and much more in the same strain, until poor Ellen, in desperation, went from the house into the yard. Seating herself, she fell to thinking of her life, her mother's ambition for her, and of how utterly she had seemed to fail in everything. She became so despondent and discouraged, that she put her head on the back of the seat and sobbed bitterly.

Virginia had just awakened from her afternoon nap, and not being able to find Mary, decided to go over and chat with Ellen. Entering the house she was greeted by Mrs. Rhinehart, who, to hide her ruffled feelings, was exceedingly gracious and affable. They chatted amiably for half an hour, for Virginia felt that never had she liked the woman as she did today. At last she asked for Ellen, and was told that she was on the lawn a short distance from the house. Mrs. Rhinehart rose and went to the window to look for her daughter. She was at first startled at what she saw, but her venomous nature coming to the surface, she felt that now was the time to strike Virginia a cruel blow, even though she sacrificed her own daughter.

Putting her finger to her lips, she gave a beatific smile, and beckoned Virginia to come to her side. "Come over here, my dear, and let me show you a pretty tableau—one which makes a poor old mother's heart rejoice." Virginia came and looked out to where Mrs. Rhinehart pointed, and there to her amazement saw Ellen and Harry Harriman standing together. His arm was about her waist, and her head was on his shoulder. He seemed to be deeply interested in her.

Mrs. Rhinehart, watching Virginia closely, saw, with satisfaction, a deathly pallor come over her face; but the girl at once recovered herself, and with a light laugh, said. "I see Ellen is too occupied to care to see me, so I'll return home."

When Harry had asked for a half day off he had happy thoughts of a glorious afternoon spent with Virginia. How surprised she would be, and how swiftly the hours would fly with the idol of his heart at his side.

Reaching Dr. Cardwell's, Harry was informed that Virginia had gone over to Ellen's and he immediately started across the spacious lawns to find the girls. Catching a glimpse of a white scarf between the trees, he turned in that direction. Instead of finding the two girls, as he supposed he would, he found Ellen with her head down and weeping. Hearing his step, before he had time to retreat, she sprang to her feet in an attempt to flee, but the sudden fright he had given her, coupled with her extremely nervous condition, caused her to grow dizzy and faint. She groped blindly and would have fallen, had not Harry sprung to her side and supported her by putting his arm about her. Her head dropped to his shoulder, and for a few moments she was hardly conscious; but recovering herself, she drew away and apologized for troubling him.

Harry respected her evident grief, offered to assist her to the house, and being gently refused, he inquired for Virginia. Ellen said she had not seen Virginia, but that she might be in the house with her mother. He excused himself, and made his way to where Mrs. Rhineheart was now to be seen. That imperious lady received him with cool indifference, preferring to learn the truth from her daughter. She told him that Virginia had spoken of going to call on a friend several blocks distant, whereupon Harry set out in that direction to find her.

When Virginia left Mrs. Rhinehart she felt as if the earth had fallen from beneath her feet. She went immediately to her room and when Harry came over half an hour later, plead headache, and would not see him. Poor Harry, his whole afternoon spoiled. He talked with Mary for a few minutes, then left for his home. That evening he came again, but Mary said Virginia had kept to her room all afternoon, not even coming down to tea. Mary had taken a tray to her door, and plead to be admitted, but Virginia had firmly refused.

Harry was depressed and blue all evening, and went to work the next morning with a heavy heart. During the day, while assisting to adjust a heavy piece of machinery, one of the hoisting chains broke. A workman, at the other side of the machine, did not see it as it toppled and was about to fall. Harry, with a quick leap, jerked the man to safety, but was himself struck a glancing blow on the head, rendering him unconscious. He was at once taken to the hospital, and though not seriously injured, his mind was dazed for several days. No one knew where his home was, so no word was sent to either his father or to his Colton friends.

It was scarce a week until he was able to return home; from George he learned that Virginia had taken a sudden notion to begin settlement work and had gone to her field of labor but the day before. The letter which Harry had written her, she had handed to George unopened, requesting him to return it to Mr. Harriman, with a note from herself, stating that she wished to drop from his life as completely as she had dropped him from hers, and that her act was final. Harry was puzzled. George said that she had been absolutely non-committal to Mary or any of them. They were all at sea as to the cause of Virginia's actions, but were agreed that it was useless to try to follow her, for the present at least.

From now on, Harry threw his whole life and strength into his work, hoping thereby to ease his aching heart, and so rapid was his rise that before the end of the year he was holding a position of trust and honor in the Overland shops.

When Mr. Warner heard of Virginia's new determination, he at once resolved to oppose her; but upon second thought, remembered his former experience and reasoned that probably it were better for her to take up this hobby, and get away from that fellow Harriman, and forget her old whim of the stage. So, instead of opposing her, he consented to her plan upon one condition; which was that he be allowed to send some one whom he trusted to escort her at night, or if at any time she felt the need of a protector. After debating with herself Virginia consented, for if her father had conceded a point why shouldn't she?

The day she left for her chosen field, Mr. Warner called Ned Sherley into his office—Ned, his trusted, tried, and true conductor. Who else would take so much interest in his little girl as Ned? He unfolded his plan to Sherley, asking him to go to the settlement, secure lodgings where he could always be within reach should Virginia need him, care for her as only he knew how her father would have him to do, and bring her back safe and sound to spend a Merry Christmas at home.

Sherley listened with a throbbing heart, to the president's words of praise, and promised that he would care for Virginia as though she was his own dear sister, and that nothing but death itself would prevent his bringing her back to him.

Virginia entered heartily into her work, and was so interested that when she saw conditions and suffering that at one time would have filled her with dismay, they now only caused a desire to alleviate that suffering, and to bring about a system of living which would better the poor for all time. Ned was always ready to be at her side, and she seemed to enjoy having him with her. She had known him since she was eight years old, and had often thought that if she had been blessed with a brother she would want him just like Ned. She still called him her big brother and confided in him as when a child.

One evening, when they were out making calls, a fire broke out in the tenement district. The crowds thronged the streets until it was impossible for them to make their way home. Ned drew Virginia into a doorway, where she gazed seemingly entranced at the lurid flames leaping high into the air. Ned drew her hand within his arm saying. "Don't look, Virginia, if it frightens you so." Virginia caught her breath, "O, Ned," she said, "do you know a fire always has the most terrible fascination for me. It terrifies me, yet I cannot keep my eyes from it. Do you believe in hereditary fear? I ask because my father has some cruel scars upon his neck and arms, which I am very sure were caused by fire, but about which he will never speak. Several times, when a child, I have asked him about them, but he seemed to be so filled with horror and dread at the thought, that lately I have not questioned him. Since I am grown, a fire seems to create in me just the same dreadful feeling that I have seen depicted in his eyes."—"Ned," and her hand crept into his, "dear old brother Ned, you will take care of your sister, won't you? I know I am foolish, but this fire, the thought of papa, and these woeful faces about me have quite upset my nerves."

Ned clasped the little hand which had been placed so confidingly in his, and said, "Care for my little sister? I would gladly give my life for her. She shall never know care nor sorrow if it is in my power to prevent it."

How calmly he spoke, but how he longed to clasp her in his arms and tell her how he loved her. How she had been his guiding light through sunshine and shadow, and how all that he was or ever hoped to be was due to his love for her. But Ned knew that he was but Sherley the conductor; and she, Virginia Warner, the president's daughter.

As they walked home both were preoccupied and spoke but little. As Ned was leaving Virginia at the door, he said, "Virginia, I have never tried to advise you about personal matters, but for your own safety, let me make a request. I have noticed that you've laid aside all of your jewels except those handsome diamond earrings. I have felt it unsafe this long time for you to wear them, but tonight I noticed a particularly villianous looking man eyeing them sharply, which I fear bodes no good."

Virginia laughed lightly. "Why Ned, I believe the fire has gotten on your nerves, too. I am sorry I cannot comply with your request, but these were my mother's. Father gave them to me on my eighteenth birthday, and I've worn them ever since. I would feel lost without them. I do not fear danger from these people. If you could see how gladly they welcome me when I enter their homes, and how the little ones cling to me when I leave, you would not believe such sinister things of them. Again Ned begged her to leave them off, but she began talking of other things, and soon said, "Good night."

Virginia's work went on tirelessly. She threw herself heart and soul into it, determined to forget her summer at Colton, and that there was ever such a person on earth as Harry Harriman. She never seemed wearied of climbing dingey flights of steps, caring for the sick, petting a baby, or teaching some poor ignorant mother how to tidy her home. She usually started for her work at nine in the morning, at which time Ned showed up to get her plans for the day.

One cold morning at about half past eight, a little girl came to the Home and asked for Miss Lockland. She was crying and said that the baby was dying, and would "the lady" please come to her mother. Virginia hurriedly left with the child, not forgetting to leave word for Ned to follow at once, as she probably would need him.

They soon reached the rickety tenement called home. Going up a flight of steps, she turned to the right and opened the door. The scene of squalor which greeted her did not shock Virginia, for she had often been here before. She immediately went over to the bed where lay the emaciated form of a child about three years old. Her practiced eye told her at a glance, that all earthly help was past, so she turned to comfort the stricken mother and care for the hungry children. As she was busy trying to light a fire with the meager fuel at hand, she heard a half snarl, half chuckle from the doorway. She looked up quickly, while the startled children drew closer to their mother.

Slouching against the door frame, was, to Virginia, the worst looking specimen of humanity she had ever seen. With brutal features, black stringey hair, and blood-shot eyes, coupled with a plainly intoxicated condition, the man was enough to make a stouter heart quail. Virginia was frightened, but went on about her work.

"An' wot d'ye tink ye'r doin' now? Come t' see the youngun kick the bucket? Well, I jes' tipped th' bucket, ye see," he said with a leer and a chuckle.

Virginia rose from in front of the stove and replied, "O, I was just trying to coax a little fire into the stove. It is bitter cold and the children are suffering so."—"Your baby is gone," she said gently, "so, now we must care for the living. Would you mind going down to get a loaf of bread and some milk?—and I will try to fix up a little breakfast." She felt that she must get him out of the house, at least until Ned came, for well she knew faithful Ned would follow her.

"Get ye some bread and milk sh'd I? Sure, me beauty, but first I must have a kiss from yer purty lips, and them ear bobs wat I seen, dec'rated ye so purty tother night, an' if ye make a noise this knife'll fix ye." And the man began edging toward her, while his wife and children crouched in a corner sobbing audibly.

Virginia was transfixed with horror, but knew that she must keep her senses and fight for her life. Oh, if Ned would only come. The villian was drawing nearer and nearer, seeming to take delight in playing with her as a cat with a mouse. Just then she heard a quick, ringing step on the stair. "Ned!" she screamed. The villian maddened at possible defeat, raised high his knife to strike. Ned bounded in, took in the situation at a glance, and leaped between them—and the knife intended for Virginia was plunged deep into his side.

Though badly wounded, he grappled with the man. Out into the hall they struggled, Ned growing perceptibly weaker, when the man, by an adroit turn of the foot, tripped him and both plunged headlong down the steps.

The villian shook himself free, and turned to run, but was almost instantly seized by an officer. But Ned lay white and still with the blood gushing from his wound.

Virginia hurried down and could only stammer incoherent answers to the policeman's questions. Soon an ambulance rushed up and Ned was borne to it, Virginia accompanying them to the hospital where she waited in agony until the doctor appeared. "How is he? Oh tell me he is not badly hurt," she moaned. The doctor told her that Ned's wound was fatal, and that his relatives and friends should be notified at once.

"He has no relatives, and we are his only friends. How long has he to live, doctor, and may I see him?" asked Virginia. "Yes, he has asked for you. You may go to him, it will do him no harm."

Virginia followed the nurse to the room where Ned lay pale as marble. As she entered, his face lighted with its old cheery smile, as he said, "Have they told you, dearie?" Virginia put down her face and sobbed as though her heart would break. "Oh, Ned, Ned, don't die and leave your little sister. I need you so much. How can I live without your big strong nature to guide me. I cannot, cannot let you die. To know that you have given your dear, noble life for me is more than I can bear; the world has seemed so cruelly false to me lately, but you have always been the same true hearted, noble Ned of years ago."

Ned's eyes brightened. "Virginia, I may tell you now, for it will do no harm, and it will make me so happy. Darling, I love you. I have loved you since you were a little girl flitting in and out and I was just Ned, the poor train boy. All that was sweet in my life you have made for me. I have always known that I could never reveal my love for you in life, and now I ask no greater happiness than to die for you.—Dearie, the doctor says I am going fast—could you, would you kiss me before I go?"

Virginia who had been sobbing during his confession now clasped his nerveless hands into her own, bent over and kissed him upon the lips. One long sigh of happiness. "Little sweetheart," he murmured—and Virginia was alone.

Mr. Warner came immediately upon receipt of Virginia's telegram, and they at once took Ned's remains home for burial.

Mr. Warner found his daughter very much affected and subdued by what she had just experienced. For weeks afterward she could not get it from her mind that it was her wilfulness that had caused Ned's death; for had she laid aside her diamonds as he had requested, she probably would have escaped insult from the drunken villian. Dear fellow, how little she had known of his love for her, and how noble his sacrifice.

The thought of Harry and his perfidy made her burn with fury. Why was the world to ordained, that the man who loved her should be compelled to worship in silence, and that other man whom she had loved so dearly, should be such a traitor?

Her mind and heart were still filled with these thoughts and feelings, when one day her father called her into the library saying: "Virginia, my dear child, I have not asked you to entertain friends, nor to help me do so while your grief was so fresh in your mind, but now, I feel that my duty compels me to be agreeable to an old friend who will be in the city for a short time. It is Mr. Holcomb, who will probably bring one of his men with him. I have asked them to dinner. We have been negotiating for some time, with a view to extending our lines over a vast territory. Cooperation is necessary to obtain this result, and while I am confident that it is a good move to make, Mr. Holcomb is as yet undecided. This man knows the business thoroughly. His rise has been rapid, but Mr. Holcomb says he has deserved it, so on Holcomb's recommendation I have consented to include him in the conference. I wish you to be especially agreeable and courteous to him, for it appears he has great influence over Mr. Holcomb, and I feel that the deal hinges almost altogether upon this fellow's word." "All right, papa," said Virginia, "I shall be glad if I can help you in any way. When do you expect them?"—"Tomorrow evening, thank you, dear."

The next evening, Mr. Warner and Virginia were in the library awaiting the arrival of their guests. The varied experiences of the past six months had only served to enhance the remarkable beauty of Virginia's face. Then she was a light-hearted girl with never a thought of the future, today she was a woman who had known some of the sorrows and cares of the world, and never had she looked so queenly beautiful as tonight, when with a gracious smile upon her lips she advanced to meet her father's guests, Mr. Holcomb and—Harry Harriman!

CHAPTER VIII.

Raymond Wayne sped on to New York, strong in his purpose to leave no stone unturned in solving the mystery of his birth. Though he was perservering to a fault, resourceful above the ordinary, and patient beyond his own expectation, his quest ended in failure. The iron chain of past events would yield no links. Returning disheartened to his hotel late one frosty night, his upturned gaze drank in the light of the silent stars and his spirits revived as he said to himself, "'Yet a little longer! Oh, Thou who watchest through the ages, give me patience to work the puzzle—In thine own good time."

Setting his face westward, Wayne arrived in Chicago, where he attended a series of post-graduate lectures pertaining to a part of his profession which had always fascinated him. One morning as he hastened up Halstead street, he met a newsboy who thrust forth a hand red with cold, grasping a few papers and piped out in a shrill treble voice, "Record-Herald! Tribune! Examiner!—Paper, sir?" "I don't care if I do," said Wayne, as he fumbled in his pocket for a coin and strode on. "Ye jarred loose from yer ear muffs" called the lad, handing them to Wayne, who had dropped them while paying for his paper. "Keep them, if you like," said Wayne "I hate them anyway."—"Sure ye hain't handin' me a lemon?" querried the urchin with dubious look. "After a day's trial you will use no other," laughed the doctor, and passed hurriedly on.

Next morning the same red fist and freckled face greeted him on the corner and the earmuffs were on duty. The third morning the lad accosted him suddenly with, "Be ye a doctor?"—"I claim to be," answered Wayne, "why?"—"Cause I wish't ye could cure Esau and I believe ye could, only if I had the rocks," said the lad, his eager eyes shining.—"Who's Esau and what's the matter with him," asked Wayne. "My brother, and he's got a cough, but he hain't got no chance—he'll never pull through," and the discouraged boy's eyes dropped as he scraped his toe along the icy pavement. "Where do you live? Might I see the lad," asked the physician suddenly interested. "Bet yer life ye kin, jes foller yer leader," and diving through various streets and alleys he at length arrived at a tenement house with Wayne at his heels.

On the way the boy had told his companion in substance that they were too poor to seek medical aid. When asked how many in family, he said, "They's a set of us boys."—"A set?"—"Yep, they's six—countin' Esau what's most gone."—"Are your father and mother living?" inquired his friend. "Don't know a bloomin thing about dad, but maw's alive all right. She scolds like fury, but you mustn't mind her." Wayne said he wouldn't mind and followed the boy up three flights of stairs into a poorly furnished, badly lighted, and never ventilated room, where a tall, raw-boned, thin-haired woman was placing a few dishes in a forlorn cupboard. In one corner was a dilapidated bed, in another a cracked and rusty stove that burned the vilest coal, and near a dingy window, in a wabbly chair, a pale, fair-haired, blue-eyed boy of seven, wrapped in a disreputable blanket. The only spot of beauty in the room was a bunch of violets in a cracked teacup on the window sill.

As the door creaked the woman who "scolded like fury" turned and her sharp voice rang out with, "What brings ye home so soon, Abe? 'Taint ten yit." —"Here's a doctor," replied the lad, "what wanted to see Esau and I brung im," and Abe led the way to the pale boy who coughed violently. "And wot would ye do for the like's of us wot can't pay?" asked the woman as she studied Wayne's face. "We shall see," replied Wayne quietly, "I will do what I can."—"The Lord be praised," exclaimed Abe's "Maw," "I'll work my finger nails off to pay ye, if ye can cure him," she cried. "Seems like I couldn't work no harder'n I do now, but I will if it kills me," and she wiped her wet hands on her apron and set out the only chair for Wayne, who was making an examination of Esau, takin the surroundings and listening to "maw's" talk all at once.

Disease was so deeply fastened on the poor boy that there seemed no probability of ever conquering it, and the young physician feared Abe had diagnosed the case perfectly when he had so laconically said, "Most gone with a cough." But he readily saw that this was a case in which he might ease the last days of the dying boy and he determined to do what he could to alleviate his suffering while he remained in Chicago.

Other visits followed in which he learned the family history. Here it is as told by Abe's "maw":

"We come here from Peory. My man, Israel, thought he could make more workin' at odd jobs here, an' he did fer a while; then luck left 'im and he started out West. Some day he'll send fer us or he'll come trampin' back home. 'Till then me an' the kids stick together an' live somehow. The worst is not havin' the right things fer the sick kid." "How many kids did ye say?" "Six, an' the ole man was bound to give 'em all Bible names, because they was all the children of Israel. The fust was Abraham—he's ten; then Isaac—he's eight; then the twins—Jacob and Esau—what's seven. Nothin' would do but the next must be named Moses—he's four; an' this little red headed young'in is David. He squalls mostly all the time. Them's their names, but the kids don't hardly know 'em. Abe, Ike, Jake, Mose, an' Dave is enough fer 'em. Esau is the only one what get the frills an' he won't be here long."

Wayne also found out that the lot of this little Esau was made more endurable by a certain young lady known as a settlement worker. "Different from most of 'em" said Abe's "maw," "She's got sense above the average. Don't treat ye as if ye was dirt under her feet, or as if she was afraid of smallpox. Miss Rhinehart makes a sight over Esau, bringin' flowers, and picters, and books, and cushions, and things."

But Wayne never met Miss Rhinehart, though he always hoped to find her at Abe's and he larned to valued her work and her character more highly than he had ever thought he could. He wished he could tell her of the noble work she did and how her efforts helped him in his attempt to alleviate the suffering of the sick boy.

The day before Wayne left Chicago he called on Abe's family, prescribed for Esau, who was gradually growing weaker, left medicine, books, fruit, and some games for the little ones, and bade them good-bye.

"Miss Rhinehart will do all she can for you and I'll hunt you up when I come back to the city." Then he was gone.

That afternoon, Miss Rhinehart, bearing carnations and a glass of jelly for Esau, climbed up the stairs to inquire after her little patient, and heard a long eulogy from Abe's "maw" on the young doctor who had helped but could not cure her son. "After he was done gone, Mose come a carryin' this parcel to me. He picked it up right where the doctor set and had tuck so many things outen his pockets, he didn't miss it. I'd send hit to 'im, but I don't know where to send hit. Won't you take hit and send hit to 'im, Miss Rhinehart? Hit might be somethin' valyable."

Miss Rhinehart took the package, turned it over and as she did so out rolled a ring and locket, each bearing in strange device, R. W. "R. W.," said Miss Rhinehart, "as I suspected, Raymond Wayne, yes, I'll send it to him."

Soon taking her leave, she wended her way by devious streets to her own lodging where she and her mother had taken up their abode. The mother, whose ambition only slumbered, always sought to win her daughter from her chosen work and place her in aristocratic ranks by a fortunate marriage. She loved her daughter but she loved position more. Of late her health had failed. Financial worries had nearly brought on nervous prostration. When Ellen entered their apartment this evening her mother startled from a light sleep, and some time elapsed before she could be quieted.

Ellen loved her mother and her life was a daily sacrifice to the whims and wishes of the ambitious woman. On one thing, however, Ellen was firm: No more matrimonial schemes. Her experience of the previous summer was too humiliating to be repeated. Wishing to interest her mother and take her mind from her unhappy self, Ellen told of her visit to the children of Israel. Knowing her mother's aversion to her work she very rarely alluded to any incident however interesting to herself, but today, seeing her mother's extreme nervous and restless state of mind, she eagerly sought some subject of conversation, and this was uppermost in her mind. So she told her mother of the sacred set of children, of their quaint says, of the mother's tact and honesty, with all her poverty. Mrs. Rhinehart seemed unusually pleased at the recital and Ellen, equally pleased, told her of Dr. Wayne's visits to the family, and finally, of his loss and of Abe's mother's honesty. "I will return the locket and ring tomorrow," said Ellen, as she handed them toward her mother. "See, is it not a queer device. R. W. interwoven?" "A ring! a locket!" cried her mother, starting up wildly. "A ring and locket! R. W.! R. W!" she screamed, "But no, it cannot be R. W. Let me see the letters."—"My God! My God!" she shrieked, clutching the jewels with death-like grip, as she fell back on the pillow in a dead faint.

All night Ellen strove to revive her mother, but conscousness failed, and all night the wretched woman clutched the ring and locket with the strange device.

Virginia Warner had returned home, pleased to be of assistance to her father, whom she loved with all her heart. The afternoon mail brought a letter from Mary Cardwell. "Bonnie Mary," murmured Virginia, "a perfect dove of peace," who writes: "Mother is happy with her birds, and flowers, and books, while she is at home, and is of great help to father in his practice. She knews of all the poor and needy. She is as good as a trained nurse in many cases, and father sometimes takes me with him and says his daughter is a chip off the old block. O Virginia, never will I forget the joy of last summer, a happy dream, with but one shock, your sudden departure without seeing or speaking of Harry Harriman. I know you will tell me the trouble some time, but I wonder and wonder.

"And oh! Virginia, I cannot tell you of myself without telling you of another with whom I have had such happy association. If there ever was a perfect man, that man surely is George Thornton. You and Ellen told me last summer that he had eyes for no one but me, and I think he really loves me, but he has never exactly said so. But he adds to my joy daily by the delightful interviews and conversations which are lengthened to hours. It seems, before he left New York he contracted to furnish an art collector with a group of pictures representing the leading characters in Tennyson's 'Idyls of the King.' Mr. Thornton has asked me to sit for Elaine, the 'Lilly Maid of Astolat.'

Why, I can never tell you. So, most delightful meetings occur in our parlor with mother as critic, for Mr. Thornton says she really has remarkable artistic taste. But 'never a day so sunny but a little cloud appears.' The delightful times must soon cease. Old things will have passed away, for as soon as this 'Elaine' is finished Mr. Thornton must leave for Old Mexico in search of local color for a great painting which is to appear in the Art Exhibit next year. He says it must add to his fame in America and for that reason he is choosing an American name and scene for his painting. Mr. Thornton very strangely told me of his ambitions and of his future plans. His eyes shone as I have never seen them as he asked me if he might come again when his picture was judged by the exhibit committee. 'I'll have more to say to you then,' he said, and left so abruptly that I should have been offended had it been any one but Mr. Thornton.

"My dear Virginia, I have told you a good deal about myself in this letter, but one thing more I must tell, and that is I love you dearly; wherever you may be, I shall love you always. MARY."

"Happy the man who secures such a jewel for his wife," sighed Virginia, and for a moment the old pain came to her heart as she thought that Harry Harriman had once appeared a hero in her eyes. "But no more of this," she cried," or I will be sniveling when I must look my best for father's guests." Everything was ready for the dinner party. Radiant in shimmering silk with the diamond earrings and necklace which her father loved to see her wear, her dark hair an artist's dream, her eyes beaming with love, Virginia paused on the stair to gaze at her father, seated before the grate, his gray head bowed upon his hands, his whole figure speaking the loneliness which the daughter knew he must feel so keenly. A wave of regret passed over her that in her selfish desire for fame she should neglect her first duty to her father and her home. Mary Cardwell's loving influence was at work with her will, and Virginia silently vowed that, come what would, she would love and comfort her lonely father. With this thought—expressed plainly on her beautiful countenance, small wonder that he embraced her with a caress that was fatal to bodice and hair as he choked out gruffly, "Don't leave me again, Virginia, I can't get along without you."—"Never again, papa, never again," and she patted him on the cheek. "You're better than the stage and I can help the settlement and still stay with you."—"That's my own little girl again," said the railroad president in great glee. Just then a servant announced, "Mr. Holcomb; Mr. Harry Holcomb." Mr. Warner turned to meet his guests and shook hands warmly with old Mr. Holcomb. "How do you do, Mr. Holcomb? I certainly am glad to receive you tonight and to have you meet my daughter, Virginia, sir. Very glad to meet your son." Then turning to the young man back of Mr. Holcomb, Mr. Warner gasped as he extended his hand. "Your son? Is this your son? What joke is this, sir?" sputtered Warner. Young Holcomb felt the floor sinking as he gazed past his father to the gentleman he had met as Mr. Lockland, and the house rocked as his dazed senses descried the beautiful Miss Lockland beside her father and being presented to his father. "Was there ever such a muss," thought Harry, who, with a gigantic struggle, pressed Mr. Warner's hand with an almost crushing force. "No joke, I assure you. All dead earnest to me."

When Virginia first saw Harry, she turned pale as her silk gown, then intuitively divining the truth, the blood rushed back to her cheeks creating a vision of beauty with which "no rose could compare."—"Very welcome, Mr. Holcomb, and a very delightful surprise," she exclaimed with her brightest smile. Harry felt his senses reel as he mechanically bowed over the hand of the beautiful Virginia. The thought that the beauty was laughing at him spurred him to greater effort, and he acted the part of a perfect society man.

Mr. Warner, flourishing his handkerchief in his excitement, was about to ask an explanation, when supper was announced, and placing Virginia's hand on Grandpa Tom's arm he motioned her to proceed to the dining room, and he followed with the young man he had sworn that Virginia must not love.

CHAPTER IX.

Mary Cardwell sat at her desk with a thoughtful and not altogether happy look on her face. She had just finished reading a letter from Virginia, and it troubled her. Among other things it did not sound like her friend. She read it again:

"My dearest Mary: Since receiving your good letter, several things have transpired that have been very upsetting—to Virginia. Since an 'honest confession is good for the soul' I'll try it, and may my soul prosper.

"Speaking of Harry Hariman, I'll confess that my heart had about surrendered and 'gone over to the enemy' when I saw something that it does not seem possible can ever be explained.

"You perhaps remember, several days before I left you I went over one afternoon to see Ellen. Her mother was alone in the drawing room and seemed remarkably pleasant. You know she had singled me out for her displeasure and sarcasm, and other comforting things, all summer, but 'every dog has his day' and this was mine—apparently, so I remained talking awhile with her before asking for Ellen. When I did so, she told me Ellen was somewhere on the lawn and went to the window to look. She beckoned me to her with a beaming smile and there under the trees a short distance away were Ellen and Harry Harriman—he with his arm around her, and she with her head on his shoulder. After what had passed between us, you will not be surprised that I was greatly disturbed, but not caring to have that woman gloating over me, I smiled blandly and said something about Ellen's being otherwise engaged and that I would not disturb her. Alas! 'Men were deceivers ever'!

"At the end of a week, as you know, I returned home, where I have been wearing a 'false front' and trying to be a comfort to my dear old Daddy. However 'men have died and worms have eaten them, but not for love,' and I do not propose to 'shuffle off this mortal coil' just at present for love or anything else.

"Last night father had invited company to dinner, Grandpa Tom and his son Harry. When the servant announced 'Mr. Holcomb; Mr. Harry Holcomb'—who do you imagine it was?—None other than Mr. Holcomb and Harry Harriman. Truly 'All the world's a stage, and all its men and women merely players.'

"Of course explanations were entered into as to 'who is who, and why' and everything passed off pleasantly enough, on the surface at least.

"I suppose I am selfish in talking of my own affairs before expressing my joy over your happy prospects. Of course it is a little early for that, but things seem to be coming your way. May all your dreams come true, Mary. I hope George Thornton realizes what a lucky man he is. If he proves as ideal a benedict as he is in his chosen profession, I think I see you going through life 'on flowery beds of ease'—Dear Mary, here's hoping!

"Give my best love to the good father and mother, and write soon to

"Yours as ever,

"VIRGINIA WARNER."

"Something must be done and done quickly," soliloquized Mary, as she finished reading the letter. "Things are in desperate straits.—The idea that two sensible people so perfectly suited to one another, are separated by some trifling thing that probably could be easily explained. It cannot be entertained for a moment. They must be brought together soon and then surely, 'love will find a way.'"

She picked up her pen and after nibbling it thoughtfully for a moment, she began writing. She wrote a long and loving letter to Virginia and in the end said she was positively famishing for a sight of her face. She must come and make her a visit, a short one if positively necessary, but a long one if possible. Anyway, come!

She then wrote to Harry Holcomb and gave him a cordial invitation to run down for a few days' visit. The city seemed so distressingly healthy that Raymond had more leisure than he knew how to employ and would be delighted to see him.

She addressed the envlopes hurriedly and enclosing the letters she hastened to catch a passing postman.

Returning to her desk, she fell into a brown study, considering ways and means. Would her scheme work? or would the breach between the self-willed pair be widened? Time alone would tell. She sat thinking until the dusk of evening fell, and she was startled when dinner was announced. "Poor Virginia," she said, as she hastily put away her letter, "with all her trials and tribulations, it is small wonder she makes a square fold for a long envelope. Mary never dreamed of the long fold in the square envelope that the postman bore away.

Like a giant skeleton against a smoky sky, rose the steel framework of the Consolidated Trust building. The streets below were blockaded with great stones and heaps of concrete. Trowels rang not unmusically on fireproof brick. Riveting hammers clanged harshly as they set the red hot rivets. A noisy engine puffed away in its little temporary shed in the street below. Cables creaked querulously as they hoisted a great steel girder into position. It had not been properly balanced and as it was lifted skyward, it failed to answer to the guide rope and careening inward it swept a workman from his narrow scaffold. A foreman forced his way quickly to the side of the injured man and finding him unconscious called out "Send for Dr. Bob quick! Joe is hurt."

Dr. Robert Warfield, or "Dr. Bob," as he was familiarly called by the workmen, with whom he was a great favorite, was the company physician. He appeared quickly on the scene. After a brief examination the ambulance was called and the man was taken to the hopsital. The doctor remained there watching him and working with him all night. The poor fellow was very restless, suffering intensely, except when under the influence of opiates. He had sustained internal injuries and the doctor was naturally uncertain what the outcome would be. In the morning Joe's eyes opened and he looked at Dr. Warfield solemnly for a few minutes, then said, "Doctor, am I going to croak?"

The doctor hardly knew how to answer him, but after a slight hesitation said, "Well, Joe, you are pretty badly knocked out, but I hope to pull you through. Still, if you have anything of importance that needs attention, I would advise you to see to it."

Joe lay there thinking awhile, then asked the doctor to send to his boarding house and get a box he would find in a certain place and bring it to him.

Dr. Warfield went himself and found the box. Returning with it he found Joe, while suffering greatly, ready for business. He directed the doctor to open the box and take out a package which he would find. Dr. Warfield did this, and as he lifted the packet which was enclosed in a wrapper, he started back with an exclamation of astonishment. On the back of it he saw the strangely interwoven monogram, "R. W."

CHAPTER X.

Ellen having spent the night in trying to restore her mother to consciousness, decided to call in medical assistance. She could think of no one who would be apt to understand her mother's case better than Dr. Cardwell, but he was too far away, as she began to feel her mother demanded immediate attention. She next thought of Dr. Wayne and he was sent for post-haste; and upon his arival found Mrs. Rhinehart still in a delirium. Through the combined efforts of Ellen and the doctor she soon regained consciousness and began to look around as though trying to gather up the fragments of her scattered thoughts. During the night, Ellen had succeeded in removing the ring and locket from the clutched hand of the wretched woman, and wrapping them up in the original package, placed it in a little purse that hung from her belt.

Upon the arrival of Dr. Wayne, she gave it to him with a few hasty words of explanation. He recognized it and thanked her for returning it to him, saying he had discovered his loss the evening before while packing his trunk preparatory to a trip to New York; that it was his intention to advertise his loss in the morning paper, offering a reward for its return.

Mrs. Rhinehart, after partaking of some nourishment, began to show some little improvement. The doctor inquiring of Ellen if she knew of any cause for her mother's sudden attack, was told of her nervous condition upon her arrival home, and of her agitation upon seeing the contents of the package Abe's mother had given her, and of her final lapse into unconsciousness.

Dr. Wayne was deeply interested in her recital and determined to find out if possible what Mrs. Rhinehart knew of the secret of his parentage. Accordingly he took the hand of the sick woman in his, and lightly pressing his skilled fingers upon her wrist, found to his disappointment the pulsations weak and uncertain, and seeing in her weakened condition the sick woman could bear no further nervous strain at this time, he, after giving Ellen some directions, and assuring her that her mother was in no danger, and would soon recover, took his departure, saying he wished to catch the Twentieth Century Limited for New York.

Mrs. Rhinehart soon sank into a quiet, restful sleep, which lasted for several hours. Ellen reclining on a couch in the same room also secured a little much needed rest. When her mother awoke, she could see at a glance that she was herself again. "You are better now, mother?" she asked. "Yes, I am better," said her mother. "Ellen, what became of those trinkets you were showing me—that locket and ring? I would like so much to see them again."—"Mother, they belonged to Dr. Wayne, and I gave them to him when he was here this morning," said Ellen, "he went to New York today, and as soon as he returns, he said he would come to see you. Now do not think any more about it, mother, or you will make yourself ill again."—"R. W.—Dr. Wayne—Raymond—you say his name is, Ellen?"—"Yes, mother"—"How strange," said Mrs. Rhinehart, "I have some good news, mama, Virginia has invited us to her home for a week's visit with them," saying she has lost none of her interest in my work, and that she wishes to consult with me in regard to a plan she has to help me." This is what she says:

"Since I left the Settlement after poor Ned's death, I have wished I might do something to help on the work, and have made up my mind to ask my father to build a settlement house, such as I know is needed in the part of the city where your work is, and I want you, Ellen, to come, and perhaps together we can persuade him to do so. It is my thought to have it erected upon the site of the tenement where poor Ned was so cruelly murdered. I suppose you know, Ellen, the perpetrator of that awful deed after his arrest became insane and soon died. So eager am I to carry out these plans, if papa cannot be induced to help me, I will use the inheritance received from my mother. Hoping to receive a favorable reply from you soon, I remain,

"Yours ever,

"VIRGINIA."

Glancing up as she finished reading the letter, Ellen saw that her mother slept once more, and quietly leaving the room, she went to her desk and wrote to Virginia, thanking her for her kind invitation and telling her as soon as her mother was better, they would be only too glad to come. "I cannot express in mere words," she said, "the joy I feel at the prospect of having the strongest desire of my heart gratified." "With a home such as you mention, the little good we do would be multiplied many times." "Your letter came as a glad surprise, and cheered and encouraged me greatly." "Hoping nothing will arise to frustrate your noble plans, I shall eagerly await the time when I shall see you face to face.

"Gratefully yours,

"ELLEN."

Mary opened her desk the next morning to finish up some work for her father. Glancing over the papers she noticed a folded sheet of note paper lying a little to one side; picking it up she unfolded it and read the note she had written to Harry Holcomb, inviting him to come for a few days' visit. She wondered how it came to be there, when she had sealed and mailed it the evening before. She laid it aside, and began to search for the letter she had received from Virginia, but it was not to be found. She wondered still more at this, and as she sat for a few moments thinking, the truth dawned upon her.

She turned first red and then white, and rushing from the room she sought her mother—"Mama, mama, what shall I do?"—"Why, Mary," exclaimed Mrs. Cardwell, "what is the matter?"—"O! mother. I have made such a mistake. You know the letter I received from Virginia yesterday."—"Yes," said her mother, encouragingly. "Well, I have done something with it, I don't know what," sobbed Mary.—"Don't know what you have done with it?" queried her mother. "No, I cannot find it anywhere. You see it was like this: I thought to try to make peace between Harry and Virginia, and so I wrote to them both and asked them to come down. I found the note I wrote to Harry on the desk and Virginia's letter to me, gone."

"Mrs. Cardwell remained buried in thought, for a few moments, as Mary continued, "You see, mama, I have not the remotest idea which of the letters I enclosed in those envelopes I mailed last night. Oh! supposing I have sent Virginia's letter to Harry!" "This is certainly unfortunate," said Mrs. Cardwell. "O, yes," said Mary, "if Harry should read that letter of Virginia's"—and then she stopped, and brightening up a little, "Well maybe it would be a good thing if he did,—but," and her face clouded once more, "what would Virginia think of me if she knew I, through carelessness, had betrayed her confidence?"

Mrs. Cardwell saw that Mary was completely unnerved, and that something must be done very soon. "Papa has a call to the hospital uptown this afternoon and we will dress and accompany him," she finally said, "from there we can go on to the Warners for a short time and then you can explain to Virginia your blunder in regard to the letters, and I am sure, everything will come out all right."—"I tell you mama, Virginia will never forgive me," wailed Mary. "I can think of no better way than to face the situation immediately, and endeavor to right it," replied her mother, "now hurry and dress, and we must make an early start to get there before evening."

Mr. Warner had noticed a change in Virginia since her return home. She was not his blithe, happy little girl as of yore. Her face often wore a sad look as though she had thoughts and memories that troubled her. She had lost the keen interest she one time had pertaining to himself and their home. While she attended to the duties that devolved upon her as mistress of her father's establishment, she did it in a perfunctory, listless manner. All this her father saw, man though he was, and set about to find the cause and a remedy if possible. Naturally his first thought was that the old desire for the stage life had returned, and he felt sure Virginia, after her promise not to leave him, would not do so, although it might cost her a hard struggle to give up her cherished plans.

Since the visit of his old business associate, Grandpa Tom, and his bright young son, and the revelations that had taken place at that time, Mr. Warner was in despair—here was Grandpa Tom's son and young Harriman, (whose acquaintance he had forbidden Virginia to cultivate) one and the same. Was ever mortal man so harrassed? "I would rather undertake to manage all the railroad systems in the country than to try to manage one young woman like my daughter," he said, as he had many times to himself. "How like her mother made him promise he would not permit her so wilful." "Ah me! perhaps I am cruel to deprive her of the one desire of her heart, to deny her the lofty privilege of uplifting the stage," he thought as his eyes twinkled. "I believe I'll consent to her spending a year abroad studying, and see what the result will be. Anyhow, I must do something, I cannot see her mope and pine her bright young life away because of her devotion to me."

After this resolution Mr. Warner felt somewhat relieved but not for long. There soon came rushing back through his brain the time, when Virginia's mother made him promise he would not permmit her to choose the stage as a profession, and that she must never know her mother was an actress. For fully an hour these thoughts crowded one after another through his already tired brain. Then he arose from his chair with a strange look of determination on his face, paced the floor for a few moments, rang the bell, and sent for Virginia.

When Virginia came into the room she saw her father was laboring under excitement. "You sent for me, daddy," she said in her old cheery way. "Yes, Virginia, I must talk with you upon a subject we have both avoided perhaps too long. Your pensive, depressed manner, the past few months, has not passed unnoticed by me, although until now I have said nothing."—"Why, have I been sullen or unkind to you papa?" she said, a little tremor in her voice. "No, not that, dear child, but you are not yourself these days; something is troubling you I am sure. Perhaps you are not well, or you may be lonely, or a number of other things may be the cause. Just what I can only surmise. Now, my daughter, I sent for you hoping to hear from your own lips something of the reason why you are so low spirited and unnatural."

As her father spoke, Virginia's face took on a tender, almost reverent look, and she went over and sat on the arm of his chair, and placing her soft white arm about his neck, she said, "Don't you worry about me, papa; I'm all right."—"Can't you confide in your 'old daddy' as you once did?" he asked.—"Father," said Virginia, "you would not understand if I did. You cannot help me. No one can." Struggling for composure, she rose from her seat. "Let's go somewhere, or do something, papa," she said. "It's such a foolish thing for us to sit here and talk about something we cannot help."—"No, Virginia, come and sit by my side again. I have something to say to you." So she drew a stool close beside her father's chair, and resting her chair upon her hands waited for him to begin.

"Virginia," he said in a low tone of voice as though fearing other ears than hers would hear what he was saying, "what I am about to tell you is among my most sacred memories, and when I have finished if you still desire to carry out your plan of preparing for the stage, I will not in any way hinder you."

Virginia's eyes, filled with amazement, gazed steadily up into the face of her father as he related to her the incident of the awful dash through the flames, and the rescue from certain death of the girl who afterward became his wife, and her mother. Terrible as it was for him to live those scenes over again, he left nothing unsaid. As he talked, he bared his arm and showed the scars that would go with him ever as a sad reminder of that night at the theater.

As Virginia looked she asked, "Why have you kept all this from me so long, papa?"—"I promised your mother you should never know these things, but rather than see you droop and die like a beautiful blossom, I have broken this most sacred promise to the dead to save the living."

Virginia's head sank lower and lower until it rested upon her knees, and the long pent up fountain of her tears burst forth, and the strong young frame shook with sobs. Her father, expecting this, calmly placed his hand upon the smooth glossy mass of hair for a moment only, and then he leaned back in his chair and let her weep as long as she would.

When she raised her head she smiled through her tears and said, "Papa—dear old daddy, I haven't the least desire to go on the stage any more, and haven't had since the day I left our train." "Well, if that isn't just like a woman," said Mr. Warner jumping up so suddenly he almost upset Virginia. "You can't tell what they are going to do. Here I have blamed myself for withholding my consent to, as I supposed, what was your most cherished plans, only to find that I am on the wrong track."

"Yes papa, you are mistaken, but since you have opened and read the pages of a sealed book to me this afternoon, I will tell you what is troubling me. Of course you will laugh when I tell you it is merely a little affair of the heart," and averting her face, she told her father all that had passed between herself and Harry Holcomb at Dr. Cardwell's. When she had finished, Mr. Warner drew her tenderly toward him, saying, "And so he thinks he can play with you, does he?" and after a moment's reflection, "Well, Virginia, are you going to allow a thing like that to cause you so much misery?'

"Then, I knew you would not understand," said Virginia. "No, I am afraid I don't, and I am afraid I never can," said her father, as the bell rang and a servant announced, "Mr. Holcomb." Mr. Warner and Virginia turned to greet Grandpa Tom, only to find themselves face to face with Harry Holcomb.

Virginia was the first to recover, and advancing held out her hand. "How do you do, Mr. Harriman—Holcomb?" she said. "How do you do Miss Lockland—Warner?" he quickly responded; whereupon all three laughed and the strained situation was relieved. Virginia, thinking the call must be purely a business one, was about to leave the room when once more the maid announced, "Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell, Miss Mary Cardwell." Virginia hastened into the hall to meet them and while wondering at this unexpected visit she was overjoyed to see them, especially Mary.

When Mr. Warner and Harry were left to themselves, the latter in a straight forward, convincing manner and without a moment's hesitation, began to explain to him the object of this hurried visit. "This is not a business call," he said. "Well, you act very much as though you meant business young man," said Mr. Warner, with a questioning look on his face. "I was never more in earnest in my life," replied Harry, "and the outcome of my talk with you will either make or mar my future."

"Whew! you are in a serious mood, sure enough, I hope I can be of some assistance," said Mr. Warner. "I came to talk to you about your daughter, Miss Warner, the most charming, sweetest, and fairest girl I have ever known. She seems as near perfection to me." —"Now, young man,' broke in Mr. Warner, "don't think Virginia is perfect, because I know better—but go on."

"You know we met at Dr. Cardwell's last summer. I was her slave from that time. She gave me reason to think she was not averse to my attentions,—and we were as happy as birds. When suddenly a change came over her—she refusd to see me—wrote me a curt note saying all was over between us—with no explanation whatever, other than she thought we had made a mistake. Our meeting here the other evening was the first since last summer at Dr. Cardwells. I looked into her eyes that night, hoping to see some little gleam of the old light I had seen there so many times, but I could not get below the calm and gracious exterior. Since that night something has come into my possession which clears up the mystery. Virginia thinks I am a villian—"

"Yes she does," chimed in Mr. Warner, "and why shouldn't she?" (never for a moment doubting everything would come out all right, and that the plans he had cherished from Virginia's childhood would be carried out, he could afford to appear at least a little indifferent) "You ought to know you could not trifle with a young woman like my daughter," he said.

"Sir, I hope I have never for a moment regarded the love of your daughter in any but the most sacred light," Harry warmly responded, "and now, all I ask is your permission to win her for my wife."—"I suspect she'll have a little something to say about it herself," said Mr. Warner. "All I ask is your consent, and I believe I can convince Virginia that at least, I am not a villian" said Harry. James Warner's manner softened, and grasping Harry by the hand, he said, "Virginia is all I have, and when I say, Win her if you can, and make her happy, you can never know what it costs me."

This conversation had taken place behind closed doors in the library and as they opened, the two men passed into the drawing room and greeted the Cardwells cordially. Mary looked straight into Harry's eyes as he took her hand in his, and saw in a moment she had nothing to fear from her mistake. "Give it to me," she said almost under her breath. And as he passed into the hall she walked beside him and without being observed by any one but Mrs. Cardwell, he handed her the letter and she placed it in the bosom of her dress. Thanking him with her eyes and turning to retrace her steps, she met Virginia, who came to bid Harry good-bye, and to invite him to come again sometime during the week, as Mary had promised to remain a few days and Ellen and her mother—with a slight emphasis on "Ellen"—were coming in the morning for a week's stay. Harry thanked her and taking her hand in his was about to raise it to his lips, when she hastily drew it away. "Good afternoon, Mr. Holcomb," she said looking away. "Good-bye, Virginia," Harry replied, "I shall come again soon."

Mrs. Cardwell had seen Harry hand Mary the letter, and divined by the expression on his face, that the contents were not unknown to him, left no further cause for uneasiness from this source, and suggested to the doctor that they return home before the hour became late. Virginia and her father urged them to remain for the night but, they could not be persuaded to do so. Mary was delighted at the prospect of a few days with Virginia, and gladly consented to remain. Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell took thier leave, promising Mary to send her up something to wear.

As soon as Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell were gone, the two girls, both talking at once, laughing and chatting about the gay times they had had last summer, slowly mounted the broad stairway to Virginia's room. Here the strong nature of the girl was everywhere in evidence. A bright fire burned in the grate, on the opposite side of the room. A softly shaded lamp, upon the table in the center, threw a mellow light upon the faces of the two girls as they entered, still chattering away like magpies. Virginia remembering her recent confession to Mary,—and Mary reminded of her blunder by the rustle of paper in the bosom of her dress—little wonder that they both felt a trifle nervous.

"How did you happen to come out today, Mary?" asked Virginia. "Why, I—I mean we—or rather papa, had to come up to the hospital to see Dutch Joe, and mama said we would come too, and run out here for a short call," said Mary, slowly. "O, yes," replied Virginia, "and I am so glad you came. I think I'll need you while Ellen is here," and Mary understood. "But who is Dutch Joe?" resumed Virginia. "Some one who was hurt a few days ago at the steel plant, it is thought fatally—and papa was called as counsel in the case," explained Mary.

Just here the dinner bell sounded and the girls hastened to the dining room and found Mr. Warner already seated. As was her custom, Virginia pressed a light kiss upon her father's brow, and motioning for Mary to be seated, took her place at the head of the table.

Mr. Warner seeing the girls were full of their own chatter, remained silent until the meal was finished. When they arose from the table, he asked Virginia who it was that was coming in the morning. "Mary, you tell papa, about Ellen and her mother, won't you please. I want to consult with the housekeeper a few moments," said Virginia leaving the room. And Mary in her sweet gentle manner, told of Ellen's accident, her slow recovery, her mother's visit, and of Ellen's final return to her work in the city. "Papa told her that if she was careful he thought she could take up her work again," said Mary. "We all became so much attached to her we were sorry to have her leave us, and I shall be so glad to see her again, resumed Mary, who never for a moment doubted that Ellen was as "true as steel," and that that waist and shoulder episode in the garden was all a terrible mistake.

Virginia returned and the two girls went once more to her room, where they sat before the fire and exchanged confidences as only girls can. "Where is Mr. Thornton, Mary," asked Virginia. "He has gone to Old Mexico. He went right after finishing his

'Elaine'. You know I told you I posed for him," replied Mary. "I felt dreadfully lonesome for a while after he went away, but Raymond came home—and, Virginia, I don't seem to care how long George stays away now."

"Why Mary Cardwell. I supposed of course George Thornton was absolutely necessary to your happiness," said Virginia in a genuinely surprised manner. "I did like him and I do now," said Mary, "but he's an artist and Raymond is a doctor and you know I'm used to doctors," and added tamely, "Papa did not seem to care very much for George, although he did not say anything. Both papa and mama think a great deal of Raymond—." Before Mary could finish, Virginia broke in, "Yes and so does Mary."

The next morning, Ellen and her mother arrived and Virginia and Mary were so pleased to see Ellen that they almost forgot to greet Mrs. Rhinehart. But Virginia hastily extended her hand, and looked into the pale face of her old-time enemy, was surprised to see nothing but gentleness and love written there. "Forgive me Virginia," she plead, still holding her hand, "I was cruel and unjust to you last summer. I knew it at the time, but simply could not help the feeling of resentment that rose in my heart against you—You had everything; Ellen and I had nothing. I had dwelt on these thoughts so long I became bitter and unreasonable."

"Mrs. Rhinehart,' said Virginia, "you are our most welcome guest, and I assure you I have no ill feeling in my heart against you—and now let us dress for lunch. Papa will be home, and we will all go motoring this afternoon."

Mr. Warner, after greeting the new comers in the parlor, excused himself for a moment and withdrew to his room. Looking at himself in the mirror for the first time in weeks, "H'm! guess I'd better spruce up a little," he thought as he noted his unkempt appearance, and hastily donning fresh linen and changing his business suit for a little more pretentious one, he once more looked in the glass, and thought he saw where Virginia got some of her good looks. He soon appeared in the parlor, and offering his arm to Mrs. Rhinehart, he led the way to the dining room, followed by the three girls.

CHAPTER XI.

After leaving the party at Warner's, Dr. Cardwell and his wife entered their car in contemplation of a delightful drive homeward in the cool of the evening. "Let the drive be slow Doctor," said Mrs. Cardwell. "Such a night as this is one for rest and enjoyment, and I know you must be tired after your busy day in the city," and Dr. Cardwell was ready to follow his wife's suggestion, for he had much to occupy his mind.

The car rolled silently over the smooth gravel road which led from the pretty suburb of Chicago to Colton. Dr. Cardwell was soon lost in thought and reviewing the day's proceedings—How he had been called to the hospital to minister to Dutch Joe who had asked the attending physician to send for him; how the nurse had related the story of Joe's fall, of the hemorrhage that followed, and how in his ravings he had called continually for Dr. Cardwell; how there was a gleam of recognition in his eyes for a moment; how Joe had tried to tell him something, and how he had made him as comfortable as possible and left him in the hands of the company physician, Dr. Warfield.

How the strong resemblance between this young doctor and his own son startled him. He had tried to think it was all the product of his own imagination and to dismiss the thought from his mind, but he found it impossible to do so. "Such a likeness! Can it be?" he murmured unconsciously. "What likeness?" asked Mrs. Cardwell smiling, "O, did I say something? I was just thinking of one of my cases at the hospital today," he replied, trying to appear unconcerned, for he thought best to keep to himself, for the present at least, his imaginings. "But a penny for your thoughts, my dear."

"Well, womanlike, I have been thinking of poor Virginia and her tangled love affair, and wondering how it will all come out in the end."—"Tut, tut, leave that to Mary, rest assured she will find a way to straighten things out when the time comes, for she is more or less of a matchmaker anyway."—"Yes, that's true, but I sometimes think Mary has a web of her own to untangle, for while she and George were the best of friends before he left, and seemed so well suited to each other, still since Raymond has returned they have been together almost constantly, and," she added, "I wonder if our long cherished hopes may not some day be fulfilled and she grow to love Raymond in a different way than as a brother?"

"Aha, one can plainly see where Mary acquires her art of matchmaking," the doctor laughingly replied, as he put on more speed and in a short time they were gliding up the winding driveway to the Cardwell homestead.

With hands thrust deep into his pockets and wearing an air of irresolution, a young man gazed absentmindedly at a group of tennis players in the distance. Today the rolling stretches of green of the golf links held no charm for him, and the hazy atmosphere seemed in keeping with his pensive mood.

The time was late afternoon of an October day—the place, the attractive lounging room of the Southside Country Club—the man, none other than Robert Warfield. At this moment a pleasant looking fellow with laughing eyes came running up, leaped quickly over the veranda railing and thrust his head through the window at the farther end of the room—"Well say, Bob, it's a wonder you wouldn't let a fellow know you were in hiding. Here I've traveled over every inch of this place and put at least fifteen people on your trail, while here you stand, the only person idiotic enough to prefer this place to the perfection out-of-doors—Do come and 'skin me' as usual at golf."

"No, not today, Dick. Can't you see my mind is miles away? I haven't a desire to 'skin' any one at present," and he turned his back indifferently on his companion, who now sat perched on the window-sill with a much injured expression.

"Goodby grouch, you're mistaken if you think I'm going to urge you to come and 'do me' when there are several hanging around out here whom I can best."

Left alone Dr. Bob drew up a large Morris chair and lighting a cigar, up went his feet to the table stacked high with magazines, and forward came his resolution to turn over in his mind the two problems which had been troubling him. He had now been in

Chicago for ten months and had become fascinated with his work. He liked to study the lives of these people who earned their living by the sweat of the brow and showed such grit and courage under such trying conditions as existed amongst the workmen of this great company. Still he did not like the thought of spending all his life among them. The old longing to go abroad and continue his study, to know better how to solve the great medical problems that arise most every day seemed stronger now than ever before.

He thought of his father and mother who had done so much for him, how they had sacrificed many things for him and seemed to get joy and happiness in so doing, he would like to see them today and talk over many things, and ask them for advice about the offer that had come to him a few days before.

The board of managers of the Presbyterian Hospital had notified him that there would soon be a vacancy on the medical staff of that institution, and they were very desirous that he take the place. He had not given them much encouragement for he hardly knew what to do. He realized that this would give him a better opportunity for scientific investigation than he could have in his present position, and it would also throw him with a more varied class of people, some of whom, at least, were possessed with the nobler ambitions of life, and would be able to assist him in the attainment of his higher ideals.

The ashes of his cigar suddenly fell on the lapel of his blue serge coat and seemed to arouse him from his reverie, and he muttered half aloud, "Dr. Bob, why this pensive mood? What has happened to cause such seriousness? I do wish Dick had collared me and dragged me away out into the fresh air."

His hand hit something hard in his pocket and he drew forth the package that had been thrust into his hands by Dutch Joe just before he sank into unconsciousness. "Confound the thing. Here's the 'hoodoo'! Glad I found it, but what to do with it! To be left with the sole possession of a dead man, with no known relatives or friends, and no instructions as to what disposition to make of it—This is no joke! From Joe's actions one might think the packet contained nuggets of gold—and labeled with my own initials, too—That 'stumped' me from the very first. Shall I peer into the mysterious package now and see what it contains? Never! I've simply got to get out and have a game of golf or die in my shell!"

He drew out his watch—'twas five o'colck and he dashed out of the door, flinging care to the four winds, and the first fellow he saw was Dick, who shouted, "Well, this is more like it! and if you have decided to doff your grouch and be yourself, I'll bet dollars to doughnuts I can 'do you' to the tune of four up and three to go."—"Done! I'll take you, old sport, so come along you will have to show me!"—and the game was on at once.

What John Warfield and his good wife had sacrificed for young Robert Warfield none but themselves would ever know. They had begun their married life in the small town of Bancroft, ten miles distant from Colton, where he, by his tireless efforts, had gradually worked his way from that of an unknown attorney-at-law up to that of a judge in the circuit court of that district.

The first thing that came into their lives to mar their uninterrupted happiness was the sudden illness and death of their only child, Malcolm, a bright lad four years of age. He contracted diphtheria in so virulent a form that the physician said from the first that there was no hope for the child's recovery. Judge Warfield and his wife watched by the bedside of their stricken child during the few days of its terrible suffering and together they bemoaned their own helplessness and the ineffective efforts of the best medical skill they could obtain.

The year following the death of little Malcolm was one of sadness and gloom, especially to the bereaved mother whose life had been so interwoven with that of her child, and she found it hard to endure the awful stillness that now reigned where once was heard the patter of tiny feet and shouts of boyish glee.

A faithful friend during these trying days was Mrs. Scott, the minister's wife, who was a frequent visitor at the Warfield home. One morning Mrs. Warfield looked out of the window toward the street and saw Mrs. Scott coming up the walk carrying a basket. "What can it be this time?" thought Mrs. Warfield, "such a dear, she is always bringing something to please or cheer my lonely hours," and she flew to open the door.

Before either could speak a cooing sound issued from the basket and out came a dimpled hand, pushing the fine woolen blanket back from a baby face. "Where did you get it?" were Mrs. Warfield's first words, as she quickly peered into the basket.

"You can never guess, so I may as well tell you at once. Last evening just as I had tucked little Helen into bed and had gone the round of kissing four pairs of rosy lips, we heard footsteps on the porch and a low halloo. Husband hurriedly opened the door but the only person he found waiting was this darling baby. Why any one would leave him with us, I do not know, unless they believed in the old saying, 'If you want something done you should ask the busiest woman in town to do it,' for surely with all the duties that fall to the lot of a minister's wife and our four sturdy children I have something to do, but," continued Mrs. Scott as Mrs. Warfield lifted the child in her arms, "I am so excited over the contents of this basket! Do look at the monogram on this blanket. Everything is marked with 'R. W.' so beautifully interwoven and embroidered with the skill of trained hands."

"That is not half so interesting to me as the face of this baby," replied Mrs. Warfield. "But what do you intend to do with him?"—"That's what I came over here to ask you about. Haven't you an idea, something to suggest," and Mrs. Scott waited for Mrs. Warfield to speak.

"O, Mrs. Scott, now I think I know your meaning —will you give him to us?"—"I would like to keep him myself," replied Mrs. Scott, "but we have our own four to provide for, and feel that if you and Mr. Warfield will take this baby, for the present at least, it will help us in the matter, and it may be only a few days until someone will be offering a ransom for him"—"With all my heart," replied Mrs. Warfield, "and I feel sure Mr. Warfield will gladly consent to this arrangement."

Two years passed and nothing was learned concerning the identity of the child, whereupon they adopted him as their own and gave him the name of

Robert Warfield. Judge Warfield rejoiced to see the smile of satisfaction once more upon the face of his wife, and together they soon found themselves planning for the future of this young life which Providence had so kindly placed in their hands.

Realizing that it would be impossible for the child to grow up in the midst of a community familiar with the events of his early life without some one revealing these facts to him, and being desirous that he should always consider himself their own son they decided it would be necessary for them to leave Bancroft.

The sacrifice which this involved none but themselves could ever understand. It meant not only the surrender of home and many friends, but the giving up of the prestige gained by years of well rendered service and the competence they were enjoying.

They moved to New York City, where Mr. Warfield continued his law practice and was able to establish a comfortable home and give Robert an education finishing with a course in the Manhattan School of Medicine.

After receiving his degree he obtained an appointment as company physician for the United Steel works with an office in New York. After two years he was transferred to the Chicago branch of this company, where he was engaged in looking after the welfare of the men employed in erecting the Consolidated Trust building, and where Dutch Joe had received the injuries which resulted in his death.

But to return to the golf links.—The game over, Bob, in high spirits stood regarding the crestfallen and altogether subdued Dick. "I hated to treat you so badly there at the last, old fellow, but I simply couldn't help it," laughed Bob. But Dick, ever the cheerful member of the club, only challenged him for another game for two days later—"And, say!" he called after Bob, who now was sauntering off toward the club house, "What's on for tomorrow night? Come on with me to the Auditorium. There's a star on the stage who is proving immensely popular and I'm having a box affair, and one of the fellows had the nerve to be called away and leave me with an extra girl on my hands." "Thanks, I'll be 'Johnnie on the Spot,' but I must hurry off now, as I have a call to make on the way home—see you later," and Bob flung his golf clubs to a nearby caddy, changed his clothes and was soon whistling his way along toward a street car.

A chubby newsboy with apple-like cheeks, thrust a paper towards him and he handed the urchin a coin accompanied by a cheery word and a smile. After swinging onto a seat near the rear end was soon lost in the perusal of the evening paper. At one stop several of the passengers filed along towards the rear of the car and some delay was caused in their alighting. A small woman with three children and twice as many large bundles was having an indescribable time with her several charges, and as the crowd paused to give her time and room, Robert was aware of some one's standing in the aisle by his side—"Why, good evening Doctor," exclaimed a merry voice. "I didn't know you had returned from your last call to New York. Did you know that Mary has invited quite a party to Colton? Won't we have just the jolliest time? You may have another chance to save us from watery graves, as we've made all sorts of plans for boating and picnicing"—all this in one breath from Virginia, for it was none other than she, as she advanced forward a few steps only to behold the small woman making a futile attempt to rearrange all of the six big bundles in one arm and to grasp each of the three fat hands with her other disengaged one.

Warfield gazed in a puzzled way at the girl beside him and managed to stammer—"Colton?—picnics?—Mary?—Why you must have made some mistake"—but the small woman had made a successful exit at last and the crowd was moving on, leaving Dr. Warfield with a look of utter amazement, and Virginia wondering—thinking—"What in the world can be the matter with Dr. Wayne?"

CHAPTER XII.

As Mrs. Rhinehart wended her way to the spacious dining room leaning upon the arm of Mr. Warner, the old-time aristocratic feeling was rekindled within her and there flashed across her mind the thought that perhaps after all there remained a chance for attaining the long cherished ambition of her heart. Perhaps after all she had been mistaken in supposing that the realization of these fond hopes could come only through the selection of the proper companion for the innocent, inexperienced, and kind-hearted Ellen. Why should not she, with her broader experience in such matters—her ability to read human nature and to act her part—be able to succeed where Ellen had failed? She was scarcely past middle age—in fact she felt exceptionally young tonight, and when the gracious Mr. Warner handed her to a place by his side and gallantly adjusted her chair for her, she resolved to use her utmost endeavor to charm and if possible to capture this railroad magnate.

"What luxurious appointments you have here, Mr. Warner—pray allow me to congratulate you upon the artistic taste you have displayed in the arrangement of your suburban home. The decorations are so tasty, so harmonious, and withal so homelike, one feels both at ease and entertained. I am wondering what your real home in Indianapolis must be like,—it must be simply exquisite."

She paused as if to read by the expression of his countenance what would be the effect of her first venture. Mr. Warner's face lighted up and a smile spread over his countenance as he replied: "Thank you, Madam Rhinehart, I am indeed glad that you like our home here. Not every one has the aesthetic taste which you display, and few possess the unenvious disposition and the ingenuous spirit whiih you exhibit, and I appreciate your compliment."

Mrs. Rhinehart was baffled for a moment; her heart was in a flutter—Was he paying her back in her own coin? Was this man of the world reading her heart, detecting her flattery, and trying to shame her at her own tactics? She could not quite decide, but having made the start, she resolved to play the game to a finish.

"Do you know," she continued, "that we are apt to form very erroneous opinions regarding those in the higher walks of life whom we have never met?" "How so?" he inquired, apparently much interested. "Why," said she, "I had the impression that the president of the Great American railway must be a very august person, and so absorbed in business affairs and in computing interest on his millions that he would scarcely deign to notice common people, much less engage in common conversation—and here I find you so courteous, so affable, and so like our own flesh and blood relations, that instead of a feeling of awe, here we are engaged in a home-like conversation and feeling perfectly at ease."

"I should count it indeed unfortunate, Mrs. Rhinehart, should my business or any other thing in this world rob me of that heart of flesh which inspires an interest in one's fellowmen, and enables one to sympathize with and be interested in the welfare of those with whom we mingle. In such a case wealth would be a curse rather than a blessing, and its possessor would be unworthy of the talent entrusted to his keeping."

"How gratifying!" exclaimed Mrs. Rheinhart, "hereafter I shall refuse to believe one word of the silly stuff the newspapers say concerning the moneyed men of our country. How cruelly unjust they are—why they picture them to us as hard-hearted, grasping creatures, who delight to trample upon the prostrate forms of the weaker ones and take delight only in seeing their fortunes increase when in reality they are the world's benefactors, and are often possessed with the highest and noblest ideals of life. Do you not find it extremely mortifying, Mr. Warner, to read such scandalous utterances as are published in the daily papers about the wealthy men of our country?

"It would indeed be both mortifying and humiliating," replied he, "if we should take them seriously; but the newspaper men believe that the majority of the people delight to read such sensational stuff, and that many enjoy seeing the skeleton of the other fellow's closet revealed so long as their own is passed unnoticed, and so the editors select the well-to-do class partly because they are fewer in number and partly because they are better able to ndure the slander, and make them the subject of ridicule, solely for the purpose of making a salable commodity of their paper. The surprising thing to me is, not that editors will stoop to do a thing so ignoble, but that the common people are either so blinded or so silly as to be influenced by such utterances."

His face had grown stern and a look of defiance had come to his eye, as if in contemplation of some recent newspaper comment particularly unpleasant to himself. She did not like to see him so; she was sorry she had broached the newspaper subject, and doubly sorry that she had confessed herself one of the silly class who had been influenced by the newspaper scandal.

"What a charming daughter you have, Mr. Warner," was her next venture. "Not everyone who has been robbed of his companion in life is blessed by having an amiable daughter to comfort and console him in his loneliness. You are indeed most fortunate in this regard also, for I assure you I know by bitter experience how sadly one bereft, is in need of some one to comfort in the lonely hour."

"Yes," answered Mr. Warner, "but"—he paused in his utterance as if doubtful of the wisdom of completing the sentence. She fancied she devined his thought and said, "you doubtless were thinking of the probable day in the near future when you will no longer have this treasure with you; but I am sure you have long since learned that it never pays to borrow tomorrow's troubles; besides, it seems to be according to the divine order of things that every soul should find its mate, and I am sure no sane parent upon reflection, would wish a child to forego a life of happiness such as comes by a union with a congenial companion, just for the sake of selfishly enjoying the child's presence a few years longer."

"What you say seems logical indeed," replied Mr. Warner, "although I have never carried the thought quite so far; the horror of ever being left alone and at the mercy of servants has seemed to preclude the possibility of further reasoning."—"But why should you be left alone? Why, my dear sir, are there not as good fish in the sea as were ever hooked? Surely the case is not so serious after all, and there is no reason why you should not yet enjoy many years of domestic tranquility as perfect as any you have ever experienced."

Mrs. Rhinehart paused as if to give him time to reflect a little upon the picture she had flashed before his gaze. She was surprised at the boldness of her own speech, and yet it was plain to her that he was not displeased with her because of her utterance, and in her heart she rejoiced that she had at once found so favorable an opportunity for sowing the seed which she hoped would one day develop into a glorious harvest.

Strange as it may seem Mr. Warner was enjoying himself as he had not done before in years, for it must be remembered no friend of his, not even Virginia herself, had ever felt free to talk with him in this unrestrained manner about the things which pertained to his everyday life, and now that he had found one who was seemingly interested in his welfare and willing to discuss with him the problems of his own life and to offer suggestions, little wonder that he was hungry for that bond of sympathy which the human heart naturally craves. Some one to whom the secret longings of the heart can be revealed—That boon, a bosom friend —which the aristocratic class so seldom enjoy, and this half-hour's conversation with Mrs. Rhinehart was the nearest approach to a confidential talk he had been permitted to enjoy for many years and so all-absorbed had Mr. Warner been that he had quite forgotten the other guests at the table. He was all unconscious of the troubled look on Virginia's face, as she beheld with astonishment her father's unusual behavior, and when she had spoken to him directly without arresting his attention, and he had even ignored her request for a second helping of escalloped oysters, neither Ellen nor Mary could longer pretend to be ignorant of the situation, and the meal ended with an awkward lull in the conversation between the three girls; but Mr. Warner remarked, as he pushed back his chair from the table, that "he didn't know when ever he had enjoyed a meal so much before,"—all unconscious of the fact that he had eaten both his own dish of salad, and the one intended for Mrs. Rhinehart, and as they repaired to the drawing room he took occasion to thank his gracious benefactor for her comforting suggestions,—adding, that "they would in all probability be of material assistance to him in his plans for the future."

"Mother," said Ellen that evening when they were alone in their room and about to retire, "I am afraid Virginia was not altogether pleased with the manner in which you absorbed Mr. Warner's attention this evening; she has hardly seemed herself since supper."

"Ellen," replied her mother, "don't presume to meddle with this tete-a-tete of mine—so long as Mr. Warner is in his present state of mind, it makes very little difference to me, whether Virginia is pleased or displeased. And now, as you have absolutely refused to follow any further suggestions of mine which might result in our exaltation to our proper rank in ehe social world, if I choose to accomplish the task unaided by you, you can surely do me the great favor of remaining quiet."

Poor Ellen! she realized that any further attempt to change her mother's attitude would be fruitless, and went to bed with a heavy heart, and only succeeded in falling asleep after a refreshing hour's meditation over future plans for the "Children of Israel" and many others of this class to whom she was trying to minister.

It was nine o'clock the following morning as the four ladies took their places at the breakfast table, Mr. Warner having left by early train for New York on important business, the announcement of which fact seemed quite to rob Mrs. Rhinehart of her appetite. Both Virginia and Ellen were eager to begin the discussion of the subject which was uppermost in their minds and hearts, and so, as soon as the meal was finished, they repaired to the library for a consultation. Virginia requesting Mrs. Rhinhart and Mary to prepare for a drive, as the coachman had been given orders to call for them at ten.

"Now, my dear Ellen," said Virginia when they were alone, "let us to business. First, let me assure you that my failure to return to Chicago to resume the settlement work, is not in any sense due to a loss of interest in the cause, for I still believe there is no class of work more truly worth while in this world; but I have come to see that my first duty, at the present time, is to my father, upon whom the weight of years and the burdens of life have rested so heavily of late, that he begins to show signs of failing health, and I have promised him that I would not again leave him to fight the battle alone. And since it is settled that I cannot return to the work in person, I have been thinking how I might help in other ways, and the plan of erecting a settlement building suggested itself to me. In the limited experience I have had in the work, I came to see how handicapped we often are because of the lack of some headquarters place from which to draw supplies, and which would serve the purpose of dispensary, training-school, day-nursery, and nurses' home all in one."

"Oh, Virginia!" cried Ellen, "how often I have wished for these very things, though I've never had the faith to believe that such a blessing would come so soon, or even in my life time. I cannot tell you, my dear, what joy I feel in the contemplation of this most worthy project you have outlined, and my constant prayer shall be that nothing may intervene to thwart your cherished plan. Though I presume it will continue to seem too good to be true. How long do you think it would take, dear, to complete such a building?" asked Ellen, and without waiting for Virginia's answer, she continued, "The reason I ask, or at least one reason is, I was wondering if this would not be an opportune time for me to complete my nurse's training course. You doubtless know, Virginia, from your own experience how difficult it is sometimes to get the counsel and medical assitance we need from the reputable physicians, especially where there is little or no hope of remuneration, and the result is, we are sometimes left to diagnose the case and prescribe the remedy unaided. How often I have trembled under the burden of responsibility thrust upon me, by the life of some helpless one being left wholly to my care, and at such times, how I have longed for an opportunity to complete my training course, that I might be the better equipped for these duties. Now, it occurs to me that I could not do better than to return at once to the Presbyterian Hospital, and perhaps with the aid of the practical experience I have had, I can finish my course in three months. Then—oh then how happy I shall be."

"You are right, dear Ellen," said Virginia, "and now as the folks are likely to return at any time, let us conclude this session by deciding this much: You are to return to the hospital and complete your work there, and my part shall be to carry out the plan for our settlement building." They arose and stood for one brief moment—each seeming able to behold the magnanimous, unselfish heart of the other—then they sealed the compact with a loving embrace and a hearty kiss.

"Did I tell you," asked Virginia, as they left the library, "that I broached the subject to father just before he left? He only remarked that he probably would have use for all his ready money in the deal he is negotiating with Mr. Holcomb, but I shall take the matter up with him again when he returns, and in case I am unable to make him see things in the same light in which we regard them, I shall ask for the money which rightfully belongs to me—some fifty-five or sixty thousand dollars—which should be quite sufficient for our immediate needs at least. Now we will 'rest our case,' as the lawyers say," concluded Virginia as they seated themselves on the veranda to await the return of Mrs. Rhinehart and Mary.

"By the way, Ellen," said Virginia, "I have a bit of very welcome news for you. Mr. Harry Holcomb is to call upon us this evening—but" she added "perhaps after all this is not news to you but only the carrying out of some pre-arranged plan about which you were consulted—but be that as it may, I'm sure we are all to be congratulated upon the prospect of a very pleasant and enjoyable evening just ahead."

"Virginia," faltered Ellen, "I am quite at a loss to know just how much of what you have been saying is in jest and how much is serious. The coming evening of enjoyment I assure you is very welcome news to one who is so nearly a recluse from all sorts of social enjoyments as I am, but, if you really imagine Mr. Holcomb's coming here tonight is in any sense on my account, let me assure you that you are wholly in error;

for, while I admire Mr. Holcomb and respect him as a gentleman, he never was and never can be anything to me. And so, my dear, if you wish to discover the real cause of Mr. Holcomb's visit here this evening, you must look either to your own sweet self or to Mary."

Mrs. Rhinehart and Mary having just returned from their drive, now joined them on the veranda, and nothing further was said upon the subject, but the look of pleased contentment that rested upon Virginia's face gave silent testimony to the fact that her heart was beating in joyous accord with the brightness and glory which today seemed to fill the outside world.

The remainder of the day passed pleasantly at the Warner home. Ellen spent a portion of the time in writing letters, while her mother was enjoying her afternoon nap. This gave Mary and Virginia an opportunity for an exchange of confidences which both enjoyed, as only such kindred spirits are able to do. Mary, however, deemed it unwise to offer the advice she had intended to give Virginia regarding her relations with Harry, but during the course of their conversation, she took occasion to express her confidence in and admiration for that gentleman, all of which seemed to please Virginia. And Mary smiled with satisfaction to herself, a little later, as she noted that Virginia spent an unusual length of time in arranging her toilet for the evening—even consulting her opinion as to whether she should wear her turban braid or her new Juliet Coif.—"O the coif, to be sure," said Mary, "I think it is so becoming with your hair waved into a moderate pompadour and brought back into a soft mass of Psyche curls." Virginia acted upon Mary's suggestions in this and other items relating to her toilet, with the result that never in her life had she appeared to a better advantage. Never had she seemed so truly beautiful as that evening as she extended her hand at the door to Harry Holcomb and, looking him squarely in the face, she said, "I am glad to welcome you, Mr. Holcomb," and her voice had such a ring of genuine candor in it, that the heart of young Holcomb experienced a thrill of joy, such as he had not known for many weeks past; and the hope within him, so poorly nourished of late, now seemed to revel as in the enjoyment of a good square meal.

It was indeed an enjoyable evening, with laughter and singing and the recounting of the adventures of days gone by—not omitting that bit of thrilling experience on the lake. "By the way," said Harry to Mary, "George has given me the cold shoulder of late—hasn't written a scratch for over two months. Please tell him for me that I do not consider myself deserving of such treatment at his hands, and that I say he might at least send a post card now and then, that we might know which continent he inhabits most. But," he added, "I don't begrudge George Thornton one iota of the fame he is achieving, for I consider him as good as gold. They say he is making a stir in London of late, and the critics of the old world are beginning to sit up and take notice of him. Well, I'm glad of it, for that old boy is as nearly four square as any one I have ever had the pleasure of knowing."

While Mary did not add anything to the eulogy of George Thornton, yet her heart again traversed the happy events of those blissful days when she had assisted him in his work, and how supremely happy she had felt in doing so.

Once or twice during the evening, Mary and Ellen sought to make excuse for leaving the company but by the exercise of tact, Virginia had managed to prevent their doing so, and when the evening was spent and Harry arose to take his departure, it would have puzzled even a close observer to guess which of the three girls had been the special object of attraction; and although he had taken his departure without so much as an invitation to call again, yet his heart was happy in the assurance that things were coming his way once more.

As Mr. Warner neared New York City, he experienced a feeling of uneasiness and dread as he contemplated this final interview with Mr. Holcomb, which he had only obtained after repeated requests—the last of which was accompanied by an insinuation that something must be done at once; that if Mr. Holcomb did not think favorably of the extension and reorganization project, he should look to others for co-operation, or else attempt the task unaided. Now, as he recalled Mr. Holcomb's seeming indifference of late and reflected upon this utter inability to manage such an enterprise alone, he regretted that he had been so unwise as even to insinuate the possibility of his assuming an attitude which would mean hostility to the Holcomb interests. What if Mr. Holcomb should undertake the project alone? or worse yet, what if he should join forces with the Central Union road, his avowed enemy? What if they should build a line in competition with his own? how powerless he would be. It would mean nothing short of ruin to the Great American road.

As these disquieting thoughts passed through his mind there arose one ray of hope—If the young man, Harry Holcomb, would only be present, he felt that he would surely have some regard for the Warner interests, for Virginia's sake, if for no other reason. He had come to admire this young man what little he had seen of him, especially the straightforward manner and the manly courage exhibited when he had asked for permission to pay court to his daughter, had not only pleased Mr. Warner, but also gave him the impression that the spirit of greed had not yet gotten a very strong hold upon the young man. But with Grandpa Tom it was different. The only estimate he seemed able to make whether of men or measures, was on the basis of dollars and cents, and Mr. Warner, as he continued his reflections, felt chagrined that during their former interview he had been led to reveal to Mr. Holcomb certain facts concerning his own enterprises which would give that gentleman a decided advantage over him in case they should ever become enemies.

The porter's call to supper aroused him from his unpleasant reveries and he sought the dining-car, where the tempting menu, together with the pleasant memories of the evening before and the recurring hope which Mrs. Rhinehart had awakened within him, combined to banish his gloom for several hours.

When Mr. Warner entered the office of the president of the Overland railroad and asked for Mr. Holcomb, he was shown to a seat in the outer office to await the coming of that gentleman. He was not sorry for a few minutes' delay, which would give him time to formulate his line of argument and arrange the points he intended to emphasize in the order of their importance—but when a half hour had passed and the interval lengthened to three-quarters and then to an hour and still Mr. Holcomb did not put in an appearance, a feeling of resentment began to possess him. He was not accustomed to such indifference. In his sphere as president of the Great American railway, men eagerly sought for the privilege of a few minutes of his valuable time, and here he had been kept waiting for over an hour and apparently with no excuse other than an intended rebuff.

He beckoned to a clerk who was entering the private office and asked him to please inform Mr. Holcomb that Mr. Warner had been kept waiting for over an hour. That affable gentleman returned in a few moments with the information that Mr. Holcomb would be engaged for several hours longer and if he had anything of importance to communicate, he would better return the following day at 10 a. m.—but, he added, if the business pertained to the matter they had previously discussed, Mr. Holcomb begged to inform Mr. Warner that he did not care to continue such discussion, as all negotiations in the matter were at an end.

The clerk quietly withdrew, leaving Mr. Warner alone with his wrath. His first impulse was to invade the private sanctum of his now avowed enemy, take him by the collar and demand an explanation; but upon second thought, he knew that would be an unwise course. His face grew livid with rage and he left the office cursing the fate which had brought him under the power of "that cur" as he now denominated Mr. Holcomb. He went to the stock exchange, thinking he might there learn something that would give him a clue to the hand that was being played against him, but he learned little aside from the fact that the Holcomb stock had experienced a boom on the market without any apparent reason—save the attitude of confidence exhibited by those "on the inside," who said nothing but seemed anxious to gobble up everything that "spelled Holcomb."

On his way to the hotel he bought a paper and eagerly scanning the headlines, his eye soon caught the glaring announcement, "Great Railroad Merger—Consolidation of the Overland and Central Union Lines—Mr. Holcomb in control." He could read no farther—mechanically folding the paper, he put it in his pocket and stood for a moment on the street corner in a half-dazed condition. A passing policeman, attracted by his pallor and strange actions, approached him to inquire what the trouble was, but before he could ask the question, Mr. Warner began to stagger and would have fallen, had not that gentleman caught him, as he sank to the pavement in a helpless and unconscious condition.

An ambulance was quickly procured and he was taken to St. Luke's Hospital. The physician pronounced his case heart trouble, superinduced by worry and intense nervous strain. By the aid of restoratives the patient soon regained consciousness and immediately asked for the paper he had been reading. The nurse quietly explained to him that he was ill, and that his case demanded absolute quiet and rest, and urged him to dismiss all agitating thoughts from his mind, and think only of his recovery. Was there anyone in the city who was especially interested in him, for whom they could send to explain his whereabouts? He rose to a sitting posture and in a wild and excited voice he shouted, "No! they are robbers, villains, and their only object was to get my money." The nurse gently, but firmly forced him to lie down again, assuring him that she understood the situation, and that he should not again mention the matter until he had slept. Then recalling her instructions to ascertain who he was, she asked his name. "I'm nobody!" he replied. "I was once James Warner, president of the Great American railroad, now I'm nobody! Ruined! Robbed!!" he wailed, as he turned his face to the wall. After some moments of incoherent mutterings he yielded to the influence of the quieting powders and fell into a troubled sleep, which lasted for several hours.

The nurses, in going the rounds a little after midnight, paused a moment by his bedside and was attracted by his whispering, and listening she detected some endearing words and in the midst of which she heard a name which sounded like Wischart or Winehart. The notation she recorded upon his tablet read, "Pulse stronger, condition improved."

CHAPTER XIII.

After spending some weeks in New York City, attending lectures and an occasional clinic, or in witnessing some marvelous exhibitions of skill upon the operating table, Dr. Wayne felt he must return to Chicago. He had heard from Mary frequently, so was not altogether in ignorance as to what was going on at home.

It had become very much the habit of the Blue-eyed Mary" to take "Ray," as she was wont to call him into her confidence. So he knew of her blunder in regard to the letters, and of the hasty visit to the home of the Warners, meeting there Ellen and Mrs. Rhinehart. He eagerly looked for the dainty envelope that contained her bright, spicy missives, and many times, in his replies, was at the point of saying that which had been uppermost in his mind and heart, for a long time. But this he said he would not do, until he had cleared up the mystery surrounding him, and while he knew now that Mary cared nothing for the young artist to whom he had supposed she had given her heart, he would not press her suit.

"My only hope, now, seems to lie with Mrs. Rhinehart," he thought, "and now that she has recovered, I must hasten and endeavor to learn the truth, whatever it may be." Before leaving, however, he wished to make one more visit to St. Luke's hospital, and set out at once, as he was all eagerness to start for home.

Upon arriving at the hospital he was told of the strange case that had been brought in the evening before, A man past middle age, a stranger in the city, it would seem from his talk. After hearing that the name, James Warner, had been given in response to inquiry as to who he might be, Dr. Wayne at once asked permission to see him.

Mr. Warner was much better after his sleep, and much more composed, and was in a condition now to give the attendant something reliable in regard to himself. At his request, he had been allowed to sit up, and was about to dictate some messages he wished sent when Dr. Wayne entered the room.

"Surely I cannot be mistaken, you are Mr. Warner of the Great American railway, are you not?" he asked, as he went to the bedside. "Yes, I am James Warner, and if my eyes do not deceive me you are Dr. Raymond Wayne, and right glad I am to see you," responded Mr. Warner, holding out his hand. "How did you come to be here and in this condition?" Dr. Wayne asked, as he laid aside his gloves and hat, and motioning to the nurse, he told her he was a physician and a friend of her patient, and requested her to leave them alone for a time. When she had gone he turned to Mr. Warner and said, "Now tell me all about it," and drawing his chair up to the side of the bed, he listened to the account of the "perfidious transaction," as the sick man called it, that had taken place, and what it meant to the Great American railroad. "The last thing I remember doing," he said, "was to buy a paper, and the next thing I knew I was here."

When he had finished, the doctor hoping to give him a little encouragement, said, "I was to leave for Chicago tonight, but if you wish, I will remain here with you for a few days and accompany you home when you are sufficiently well to make the journey." Mr. Warner expressed his appreciation of this kind offer, and begged him to remain if he could possibly do so.

"I will stay with you, and shall do my utmost to have you on your feet in a short time. In the meantime I will notify your daughter of your condition, and advise her to come so you will have her near you." "Yes, send for Virginia," said Mr. Warner in a weak voice, "She must know about this right away. She has often helped me in my business affairs, and sometimes I have thought she was as well able to handle them as myself." Sighing deeply, he added, "I wonder what she will do when she hears what has befallen us?" "If I mistake not, sir, Miss Warner will not be crushed by the probable loss of wealth, but her anxiety will center entirely upon you and your health. She will be here tomorrow night, and now let us see how much better you can be by that time—and let us hope things are not so bad as they appear," said the kind-hearted young doctor.

The day had been spent at the Warner home in much the same manner as the previous one, by the three girls and Mrs. Rhinehart. Virginia had read the evening papers,—and at once knew what those glaring headlines meant to her father's interests. She said nothing, however, and while she was perhaps a trifle less gay than usual, she had looked well after the pleasure and entertainment of her guests, and the day had been a pleasant one for them all. Late in the afternoon, a messenger boy handed the servant a box for her, and opening it, she disclosed a cluster of beautiful red roses, the kind she loved the best. Hastily picking up the note that lay almost hidden among the waxen leaves, she handed the box to Ellen, and read aloud, "Dear Miss Warner, I shall not be able to keep my appointment with yourself and friends tonight, as imperative business calls me to New York." Then she stopped and finished reading the note with her eyes only, which ran, "Please accept the roses. I selected red ones, because we both like them best. I shall imagine you with one in your hair tonight. Truthfully yours, Harry Holcomb." Mary and Ellen smiled when Virginia ceased to read aloud, but wisely said nothing, and all three still admiring the half open buds, walked arm in arm into the library, where Mrs. Rhinehart sat reading and looking quite contented and happy.

They were scarcely seated before a maid entered bearing a telegram, which she handed Virginia, who hastily tore open and read the message. The eyes of the girls and Mrs. Rhinehart were fixed upon her, but she gave no sign of the tumult within, other than to turn very pale, and rising quickly, said "This is from Dr. Wayne. Papa is ill at St. Luke's hospital in New York and I must go at once." "From Raymond!" exclaimed Mary, " why, how can that be? he was coming home tonight." In reply, Virginia handed her the telegram, and left to make preparations for her hasty journey.

Mrs. Rhinehart became very much agitated when Virginia stated the contents of the telegram, and said to Ellen, "Of course Virginia must go to poor, dear Mr. Warner, but it would not be right for her to go alone," and thereupon declared her intention of accompanying her, and rising hurriedly went to her room, followed by Ellen.

Once in the room, Ellen tried to dissuade her mother from carrying out her intentions, but to no purpose. "Nothing can keep me from going," she said, beginning to gather up her wearing apparel. Ellen however, was determined she should not go, and crossing the room, took a firm hold of her mother's shoulders, and turning her abruptly around, looked her squarely in the face, and said, "You cannot go with Virginia to New York."

Mrs. Rhinehart fairly gasped with astonishment. "Well, if I ever heard of the like. My own child attempting to thwart my plans at every turn like this. I tell you, Ellen, I shall go to poor Mr. Warner. He is ill and needs me," she screamed. "No mother, he did not send for you, he sent for his daughter. What can an inexperienced girl like that do when she gets there? I tell you once more, I am going." And struggling to free herself from the grasp of her daughter, she realized the physical strength with which that young lady was blessed. "Mother, you shock and mortify me beyond measure. How can you be so foolish. Mr. Warner is nothing to you, and you are nothing to him. You surely cannot realize the position you have taken in regard to this matter. You have set aside all womanly modesty and have acted like an ill-bred, avaricious creature who cares little or nothing, how she gains her ends. I have tried to be patient when you have attacked me and my principles, but I cannot see you making yourself ridiculous and hold my peace."

Mrs. Rhinehart had never seen Ellen like this, and it caused her to understand something of the strength of purpose underlying her daughter's character. However she was not ready to yield the authority she had always exercised over her, and although trembling and weak from excitement, she made one more, desperate effort to gain her point, but by taking a new tack. Ellen had placed her in a chair and was about to go to Virginia, when she spoke once more, in a voice choked by sobs, "Ellen, my child, why have you spoken in this manner to me? You have hurt me cruelly."—"You forced me to do it mother," interrupted the girl, unheeded by the weeping woman. "I have disclosed to you my purpose in acting as I have, toward Mr. Warner, and no better opportunity could be had than the present one. He is ill and needs sympathy, and"—"Mother, I will not listen further to talk of this kind," poor Ellen was almost beside herself, "and if you persist in carrying out this wild notion, I shall use force to prevent you from doing so."

Seeing she had failed utterly, Mrs. Rhinehart began to upbraid the faithful girl, who—as she watched her mother closely during her passionate utterances, feared for the worst. For some time, Ellen had detected symptoms of mental weakness in her mother, and of late, with her failing health, this had become more and more pronounced until now Ellen had become convinced that she could scarcely be held responsible for her actions. Truly, the outlook was anything but bright. She felt she must take her mother back to the city and seek advice at once. The now thoroughly exhausted woman, pale and trembling, was placed upon a couch, and after gently caressing her hair and otherwise soothing her, Ellen saw that she slept.

Quietly locking the door, she sought Virginia, who was now ready to start for the city. She said she intended going to her father's office before leaving for New York, as she wished to make sure of the whereabouts of certain papers she knew he had. She would take her maid with her, she said, in case she needed help. As she passed through the library, she took from the bunch of roses a single blossom, and fastening it at her belt, turned to the girls, "I want you to stay just the same as if I were here," she said. "I am so sorry to leave you like this. I have arranged to have everything go on as usual, and I shall send you some word as soon as I find out how things are."

"Virginia, dear, I think I shall go back to Colton in the morning," said Mary, "and perhaps I can come again when you return. I was thinking of going anyway." "O, yes, of course you want to go home for 'HE' is coming, you say," said Virginia in a bantering tone, and as she kissed the fair sweet face, added, I shall not try to keep you, Mary. Good-bye, girls—but where is Mrs. Rhinehart?" she asked, looking about. "She is sleeping," replied Ellen, "and with your permission I will tell her good-bye for you. And Virginia, my dear friend, I want to thank you for this delightful glimpse of your home life, and to tell you how much I appreciate your kindness in inviting us here. Mother and I will return to Chicago tomorrow. I feel some advice necessary in regard to her condition, and I think it better to seek it at once. I shall think of you constantly and will anxiously await some word from you."

Ellen, with a sad and heavy heart filled with shame, mingled with sorrow at the turn affairs had taken, hastened back to where her mother still lay sleeping, and seating herself beside the couch, could not keep back the memories that came crowding to her mind. Always she had been made to suffer, even in her school-girl days she had not been brilliant enough to satisfy her ambitious mother, who had sacrificed much to keep her there. This she well knew and felt keenly, and when at the close of her second year at College, she had come home with a heart full of happiness and told her of a certain young medical student whom she had met and learned to love, and one day promised to wed—how angry her mother had become and ended by forbidding any further communication between them.

At this point her thoughts reverted to George Thornton, and her passing fancy for him, during her stay at Colton the past summer. In her mind she found herself comparing him with the manly young fellow, whose clear gray eyes had looked into hers as she told him of her plan to enter Settlement work, and she smiled sadly as she remembered his telling her it made no difference what might happen, he would always remain true to her. She cared nothing for George Thornton now, of this she was fully convinced, and as she thought of Robert and the bright, sunny hours they had spent together during their school days, the old longing and heartache returned in full force, and throwing herself upon the bed, she sobbed long and bitterly. She had wondered many times where he was and what he was doing, and whether she would ever see him again. "Ah, surely," she thought, "fate has something beside work and sacrifice in store for me," and dashing the tears from her eyes, she rose and bathing her face and rearranging her hair, set about preparing for the journey back to the city.

The following morning Ellen wakened her mother somewhat earlier than usual and found she was subdued, but still angry and resentful. "We will go back home, this morning. Mother, I think it best," she said, fearing she might lose control of the situation. "Oh, well, of course that settles it then," snapped that lady, "I could not expect to be consulted n the matter," and in an injured tone went on t say, "Anything I might say would have no weight whatever. When I was a child, children were supposed to obey their parents, now parents are forced to obey their children." Ellen paid no attention to what her mother was saying, but continued to help her dress, which was no easy matter.

When the breakfast bell rang, Mary, ready to go down, met them in the hall, and they went to the dining room together. When the meal was over, the three set out at once for the city, Mary wishing to do some shopping before going back to Colton.

Virginia hastened to the private office of Mr. Warner, which was entirely separate from the general offices of the Great American system, now located in a magnificent building close to the Chicago terminus. In fact this private office was nothing but a dingy little room, maintained by the president as a hiding place from reporters and others whom he wished to avoid. Few people knew of the place as the office of the president of a railroad, or anything else for that matter, as there was nothing to indicate who or for what purpose it was occupied. Here James Warner would be likely to keep such papers and documents as must needs be preserved, though having no immediate significance in regard to the management of that great system of which he was the head. He was in the habit of going through the little safe occasionally and reading carefully the papers kept there. Many times Virginia had helped him do so, and now the knowledge she had gained in this way was to help him amazingly in his present difficulty.

As our heroine unlocked the door, she was filled with dread lest her search prove futile. At last as she fingered the lock, the safe door opened and its contents lay before her. She carefully examined each paper without finding that for which she had come. She spent some time, and as she cousulted her watch, began to fear she would have to go without it after all.

She was in the act of closing the door, when she noticed a long, legal-looking, envelope lying close to the side of the drawer. Drawing it from its hiding place, she read in the upper left hand corner, "Gage & Lorimer, Attorneys-at-Law."—"There it is," she exclaimed aloud. "Oh, I am so glad. I am sure papa can use this—and I think Mr. Thomas Holcomb will find out a thing or two," and slamming the door of the safe shut, and securely locking the door of the little room, she ran down the stairs.

Once outside she called a carriage, and was soon on board the fast train for New York. She had managed by sheer good luck to secure a stateroom, by sending her trusted maid to the station, while she went to the little office uptown. They were soon comfortably settled for the night, but Virginia slept little, and as the hours passed slowly by, became more uneasy and anxious for her father. Many times she had felt the cares and responsibilities of his position were too much for him, and had plead with him to retire to private life and rest. But no,—he was not yet ready to step aside and get out of the race. "No, indeed, I would die without my work," he had replied, and she had said, "You can kill yourself in more ways than one, papa," at which he only laughed. And now she wondered as the train sped on, "How, will I find him? Oh, I wish I had gone with him, as he wanted me to. I am sure this secret combination of the Overland and Central was a surprise and shock to him—and was doubtless, more than he could endure. "I wonder," she mused, "just how much Mr. Harry Holcomb knows of this move on the part of the Overland? Plenty, I've no doubt. He evidently was not satisfied with making a fool of me, but now attacks my father. Well, so it is, and now we shall see what a certain young lady can do when she has to. And if Mr. Holcomb and his son Harry are not made to bend the knee before many days, I will miss my guess."

And so her thoughts ran all through the long night, as the train rushed rapidly on. As the morning dawned, she fell into a quiet slumber that lasted several hours. The faithful maid had arisen and kept guard over the sleeping girl. When she awoke she was rested and refreshed.

They were nearing the great city at last, and were preparing to leave the train, when Virginia, tucking the now faded rosebud in her belt once more, stepped outside the door of her compartment, only to find herself face to face with Harry Holcomb. "Why Virginia," he exclaimed, "you here?"—"Yes, I am here," with an air of defiance. "My father is ill at the hospital, and sent for me. You can probably guess the cause," she added bitterly. In a moment the truth flashed upon him, and when he realized its full import, he was staggered. He felt the breach between himself and this beautiful girl, of whom he had been so sure, widening perceptibly. In his mind he saw her lost to him forever, through this foolish move of the Overland. As he looked into her flushed determined face he longed to assure her he would do his utmost to right this thing. "Miss Warner—Virginia, listen to me"—"Mr. Holcomb, this is no time nor place for idle words, and your sympathy I do not want." She turned to leave him, and as she did so, the faded rosebud fell at his feet. "You have dropped something," he said. She turned, and as he handed her the withered blossom, for a brief moment, their hands and eyes met, and Virginia turning scarlet, tossed it once more to the floor, and rushed into her stateroom, slamming the door after her.

The train had reached the station and people were rushing hither and yon, all bent on getting somewhere without any more delay than necessary. In the crowd Virginia had hoped to lose herself and thus avoid meeting Harry again, if possible. She, followed by her maid, entered a waiting conveyance, and had just uttered the words, "St. Luke's Hospital as quick as you can," when a familiar voice called out, "wait a moment, Miss Warner," and glancing up, she saw Dr. Wayne stopping to greet Harry Holcomb. Harry saw the eager look on Virginia's face as she smiled and held out her hand to the young doctor, who was soon seated beside her. While he quickly guessed what had brought about the meeting, he was unreasonable enough to think he hated Wayne for being there, and fumed inwardly at the look of mischievous satisfaction Dr. Wayne gave him as he assumed proprietorship over Virginia and her belongings.

On the way to the hospital the anxious girl plied the doctor with questions about her father's condition, and what the probable outcome would be and was assured there was no further danger of a recurrence of the attack, provided he did not become unduly excited. "I have, at his request, spent most of the time with him since I learned he was here," the doctor told her, "and have watched him closely, and, so far as I can see, there is no cause for alarm. Of course, you will take him home in a few days, and then he will soon be as well as ever."

Virginia was much relieved at what Dr. Wayne had told her, and as the carriage drew up to the hospital entrance, ran lightly up the steps and stood waiting, while he dismissed the driver and helped the maid with the luggage. It was now nearly nine o'clock, in the evening, and ordinarily admission to the hospital could not have been gained, but Dr. Wayne had made arrangements to have Virginia see Mr. Warner as soon as she arrived, for which she was grateful. She was now sure his condition would warrant at least a perusal of the papers she had brought with her, and she determined to become satisfied as to their value before she slept. Mr. Warner was expecting her, and when she entered the room where he sat, propped up in bed, he held out both his hands, and as she kissed the dear pale face, she struggled hard to control her emotions and tried her best to appear calm and courageous. "Well, papa you have a fine way of breaking into my house parties," she finally managed to say. "Don't I though. I am sorry," he began, but Virginia interrupted him—"Now, never you mind. I wanted to come to New York anyway. I haven't been here for ever so long. You are ever so much better aren't you, daddy."—"O, I suppose so," he answered, "but Virginia were it not for you, I would not care much whether I live or die. You do not know what has happened to the Great American."—"O, yes I do, papa, I read the papers as well as you, and I think I understand the full meaning of what I read the other evening. The Holcombs are showing their hands and I only hope the Warners can take a hand in the game"—"Oh, Virginia, you do not understand. What can we do in a case like this?" Mr. Warner told her then all that had taken place since he arrived in the city, not forgetting to speak of the discourteous treatment he had received at the hands of Holcomb, Sr. "That surprises me, papa," said Virginia. "You were there by appointment, and Mr. Holcomb should have see you." She was inclined to think there was a mistake somewhere. Business men were not likely to make appointments of that nature and set them aside lightly. "Well, he didn't see me and the probabilities are his failure to do so means the final taking over of our system by the Overland."

At the thought Mr. Warner was scarcely able to control himself. Virginia, reaching for her handbag, took from it the long envolope she had guarded so carefully during her trip. "Papa, what does this mean?" and started to read. "Read the dates, Virginia," cried Mr. Warner, and as she did so, he lay back limp and helpless—but for a moment only. Then straightening up, he said, "Well, well, I am certainly the biggest idiot that was ever allowed to come to New York alone. What in the world made me forget about that paper? and how did you happen to think of it, Virginia you blessed child?"—"O I do not know, I knew you had it, and that it was drawn up to meet just such an emergency as this, and I hunted it up, and here it is." As James Warner listened, he chuckled to himself. "I imagine Holcomb will be mighty glad to see me the next time I make an appointment with him. Virginia, this makes me feel as though I were not capable of managing my affairs any longer, and I am tempted to turn the whole thing over to you."—"O my," laughed the now happy girl, "I have no desire to run a railroad, I have all I can do to see after and manage you"—"What will I do when you leave me?" he asked. "Do not borrow any trouble on that score, papa; the present indications are that I will be with you for some time to come. Now I am tired and so are you Go to sleep, and I will be here in the morning."

She kissed him fondly, and left him to seek Dr. Wayne, who had engaged rooms for her at a nearby hotel. He escorted her thither. "How can I ever thank you," Virginia had begun, but he begged her to desist, and tell him of the folks at home. She did so, and ended by saying, "You must not remain here longer on our account, doctor, because I happen to know the 'folks at home' are expecting you."—"No, they are not," he replied "I have sent them word that I will not be there for a day or two yet, and I hope when I go Mr. Warner will be well enough to go, too."—"I am sure you are most kind and thoughtful,—and I shall not soon forget it, I assure you," said Virginia sincerely, "I think you will find papa more hopeful, and I hope much better in the morning, and perhaps we can start home tomorrow. Good night, Dr. Wayne, and many, many, thanks."

The next morning, Virginia hastened to the hospital, and as she had predicted, found her father much better. Dr. Wayne was there before her, and after greeting her, was about to go but Mr. Warner asked him to remain with them for a little time if he could conveniently. He consented, and Mr. Warner launched at once, into his plan of action in regard to the papers Virginia had brought. He said he would go himself to the office of the Overland and have it out with Holcomb. "Papa, that is absurd. You must not think of such a thing," said Virginia, "We will send for him to come here."—"He will never come," said Mr. Warner, "and I must have this thing settled."—"You must not go, father. If any one goes I will," said the plucky girl. "You give me careful directions, and I promise you to carry them cut, and will try not to lose my head. I have an almost uncontrollable desire to get even with somebody, and think I would just a little rather, it be the Holcombs than anyone else. What say you, papa? Shall I go?" Mr. Warner appealed to Dr. Wayne. "Would it be safer for me to go, doctor?"—"By no means," came the answer promptly, "Send Miss Warner, and I will go with her, if for no other purpose than to see that the Holcombs are not annihilated without first being given a chance to seek pardon for their sins."

And so Virginia, in company with the young doctor, who was indeed proving himself "a friend in need," started at once for the offices of the Overland railroad. Upon arriving, she was admitted at once to the office of the president. "I will not be long," she said to Dr. Wayne, who remained in the outer office.

The cordial greeting and handshake, with the question, "How's the father," coming from Mr. Holcomb, so unexpectedly, confused her for a moment, but she could not keep from smiling as she thought, "What a fine actor has been lost to the stage."—"My father has been very ill."—"Is that so?" said Mr. Holcomb. "Yes, he has been in the hospital ever since the day he came to see you."—"But he did not come to see me, as I expected."—"Yes, he was here, and you refused to see him," said Virginia, wondering what he expected to gain by claiming her father as the delinquent. Grandpa Tom, considerably mystified, still insisted he had heard nothing from James Warner since making an appointment with him some days before. "Pray be seated, Miss Warner," he said. "I wish to know more of your father's illness."

As she seated herself, the tall, gaunt figure of a man, who had stood in the shadow unobserved by Virginia, came toward them. He was a stranger to her, and she was about to resume her accusations against Mr. Holcomb, when he spoke. "I did it, Holcomb."—"Warner sent his card, while you were in at your desk there," pointing to the grating that divided the room, "and we were in a hurry to get through, so I told the clerk to put him off. I did not want to see him at that time and thought it best not to have our conference interrupted." Virginia instantly surmised that this smooth, faultlessly garbed gentleman, was none other than Douglas Jamison of the Central Union lines, of whom she had heard her father speak. She said nothing, however, waiting for Grandpa Tom, who plainly showed his astonishment, to speak. Finally he ventured, "Mr. Jamison, was it not a little early for you to take matters into your own hands?"—"O, I don't know, I might as well begin now as any time," came the ready response, "and if this young lady has finished her business, we will proceed at once to close up this affair of ours, as I am anxious to get away." Virginia, addressing this officious self-satisfied being, said, "My business here was not to see you, sir, but as you are here, I ask you to remain and hear what the Great American has to say in regard to the consolidation of the Overland and Central Union lines." And drawing the much prized paper from its covering, she read the "option" her father's system held on the Central Union lines and which would not expire until March 19, 1911. "I think, Mr. Jamison, you will find that will hold good in any court in the land." Virginia was trembling visibly, and wondering what she would do next, when Mr. Holcomb spoke, "I knew of that 'option' but supposed it had expired, as you said, Jamison." That worthy gentleman did not deign to reply. To say he was surprised, would be putting it mildly. He made no sign, however, and seating himself, riveted his eyes, filled with cunning and baffled rage, upon Virginia's face. She met his gaze fearlessly as he sneered, "Do you think my charming young lady, we will accept your statement in regard to this matter? The president of the Great American railway company may have changed those dates, you know, to suit himself."—"My father is an honorable man," cried Virginia hotly, "and no one but a dishonest person, like you seem to be would think of such a thing."

To this outburst he paid no need. He was thinking how to gain possession of that accursed paper. He knew full well now, in his rascally scheme to get control of the Holcomb lines, he had overreached himself. He was honest when he told Grandpa Tom the "option" had expired. He thought it had, and did not take time to make sure. When the Great American had helped the Central Union lines to meet a crisis and had taken the option as security, Douglas Jamison was pleased; but he had become ambitious of late and settled upon Grandpa Tom and the Overland as a first step to greatness.

"I would like to see that paper for myself, if you have no objections, Miss Warner," he said in a tone designed to arrest suspicion. "O no, I cannot let you have it. Anytime you may wish to see it, however, when my father returns to Chicago, you can no doubt do so," said Virginia, thinking to satisfy him. "But supposing I insist upon seeing it now, what could you do to prevent it?" and rising slowly, he advanced menacingly toward the now thoroughly frightened girl.—Suddenly the door to the grating on the opposite side of the room opened and Harry Holcomb sprang to Virginia's side. "Mr. Jamison, do not molest this young lady—or you will feel the strength of that," and he held up a clinched fist. "The game is up and you might as well admit it, but you are beaten all right, and in the future if you take a notion to tie up to the Overland, kindly inform Holcomb, Jr., of your intentions, as hereafter he can be found in the office with his father." Virginia had clasped Harry's uplifted arm and all unconsciously, was still clinging to it, when he turned to her. "Virginia, if you say so, I'll break every bone in his miserable body," so elated was he at being able to render her some little service, his enthusiasm knew no bounds.

Virginia had regained her composure by this time, and thanking Harry for his timely intervention, asked him to see that the newspapers corrected the account of the consolidation published a few days before, knowing it would require this to satisfy her father. "What shall I have them say?" he asked. And looking at the elder Holcomb, who had dropped into a chair and remained silent and motionless, inwardly thanking his stars he had escaped so easily, Virginia replied, "Just say the deal is off or something of the kind. It does not occur to me it is necessary to give the facts to the public, but if either of these gentlemen desire to enter into detail in regard to the matter, they are at perfect liberty to do so.

CHAPTER XIV.

Robert Warfield swung skillfully to the pavement from the half-checked trolley at a quarter of six. He strode rapidly eastward and now and again the glare of an arc light caught his hurrying figure and a pair of heels were hitting the sidewalk in swift staccato. It was not until he climbed the steps of his boarding house that he was able to cast from his mind who the handsome maiden was that had evidently mistaken him for another. " 'Colton!! 'Picnics!' 'Mary!' Who does she think I am?"

Robert dressed hurriedly for dinner that night. There was so much to think about—so much to be explained. Never before in his life had stirring events succeeded each other so rapidly as they had in the last few days.

Dinner over, Robert returned to his room. He thrust his hand into his pocket and drew forth the package that Dutch Joe had given him on his deathbed. Robert decided that he would at last break the "hoodoo" and open it. When Joe gave him the package he had thought it contained nuggets of gold, then, too, the package was labeled with his own initials, "R. W." In tearing open the package he found it contained nothing more than a gentleman's watch with the same "R. W." engraved on the back, and the name "Robert Wainright" on the inside, also a lock of hair, and some papers.

"Looks like a pretty good watch," Robert thought as he glanced curiously at the time-piece. He snapped open the back of the case to examine the works, when he noticed therein the picture of a beautiful woman. The picture evidently had been taken years ago.

Robert cast the contents of the package into his traveling bag with little concern, except to wonder how Dutch Joe had come into possession of it, and why he gave it to him.

Ten months had passed as the company's physician at the steel plant, and the recent offer from the

Presbyterian hospital had put Robert to thinking. He felt that to accept would mean greater things later on, and as advancement was the height of his ambition, he wished that his father and mother were only near enough that they might advise him.

Judge John Warfield in New York, having attained such prominence by reason of his exceptional tact, skill, and logical reasoning, had won fame in the legal profession.

He was the general attorney for the Overland railway and had planned to meet the president and the board of directors of the Great American railway to complete final arrangements in the contemplated consolidation. But word had come that the president was ill at St. Luke's hospital, and that a postponement of ten days was necessary; but as the president was convalescent, any important matter would be considered by him.

Judge Warfield was anxious to get matters settled with the Overland and Great American railways. He arrived at the hospital and was shown to Warner's room. He found him comfortably seated in a Morris chair. After hearty hand-shakes and exchange of "Good morning, Mr. Warner," and "Glad to see you, Judge," Mr. Warfield was seated to the right of the convalescent patient. Mr. Warner was glad to see the Judge, and remarked that he was sorry of conditions that made it necessary for a postponement of the directors' meeting.

It was now 11 o'clock in the morning, when in stepped Dr. Wayne to see how his friend, Mr. Warner, was getting along. Judge Warfield looked up, and with a smile of surprise remarked, "When did you come, my boy? and what are you doing—hunting me up? How did you know I was here?"

Dr. Wayne looked dumb-founded, and remarked that he guessed he must be mistaken. Mr. Warner then introduced Dr. Wayne and Judge Warfield, explaining that the Judge was the general attorney for the Overland. The Judge told the doctor that he was the very picture of his son, now a physician in Chicago.

Judge Warfield was so impressed by the likeness to his son, that he wished to know more of Dr. Wayne, and extended to him a very cordial invitation to take dinner with him and his wife at their home on Riverside Drive. The doctor remarked that he would be in New York only a few days longer and that if he could conveniently do so he would call him by telephone and arrange for such an engagament.

After completing arrangements with Mr. Warner for a meeting with the board of directors in the general offices on the 15th, Judge Warfield bid both adieu, and boarded the street car as the hands of his watch pointed to 11.30. Soon the distances between the houses grew apace with the blocks traversed, and he was, after an hour's ride, comfortably seated for luncheon in Hahn's.

Luncheon over, he hurried to his office two blocks away, to open his afternoon's mail. In the stack of letters he noticed one from his son Robert. This he opened first, and from it gleaned the intelligence that the son, having been offered a position in the Presbyterian hospital, desired to take a trip home to consult with them; and then, too it had been ten months since they had seen each other. At the dinner table that evening all was rejoicing in anticipation of the son's visit within a week. Days seemed like weeks to the anxious parents. Dr. Wayne in the meantime had telephoned Judge Warfield that he would be out to dinner on Wednesday evening, as he had planned to return to Chicago on the following day.

Dr. Warfield left Chicago on the Atlantic Limited at midnight Tuesday and would arrive in New York in the early evening. He did not think it worth while to wire his parents of his coming, as his letter had stated that he would leave near the middle of the week.

After arriving at the Grand Central station at 5:20 Wednesday afternoon, he hurried over to the subway and was soon speeding to Seventy-second street, from which point he would have to walk two blocks west. He hardly thought his parents would be looking for him, as most of their friends take the all-night ride from Chicago.

The house, he found, was brilliantly lighted and it seemed that his coming was very much expected. He saw through the window his mother seated at the library table reading, and his father pouring over some papers, that appeared to be legal documents.

He pushed the button which quickly brought his father to the door. The door unlocked, a warm hand was extended, greeting the new arrival. "Good evening Dr. Wayne," said the Judge, "I am delighted that you are here with us before your return home."

"Well, Father, can it be that you have forgotten your son in ten months?" said Robert.

"Well, upon my word, I have made the mistake, thinking you were Dr. Wayne, as he was coming out to dinner, this evening. He is your very image, my boy, and I am so glad that you will get to see him. Dr. Wayne is from near Chicago and is a special friend of President Warner of the Great American railway and I mistook him for you at the hospital the other morning. I never saw two look more alike—you would pass for twins."

The mother greeted the son in a most cordial way, and she remarked that she could never make a mistake as the Judge had done. She would know her boy and his features too well ever to make a mistake of that kind.

Scarcely five minutes had elapsed when the door bell rang again. Mrs. Warfield opened it and in astonishment remarked, "You rascal, I thought you had gone upstairs to take a bath. How came you out here?"

Just then the Judge stepped from the library and greeted Dr. Wayne, introducing him to his wife. Mrs. Warfield could hardly believe her eyes. The exact image of her son Robert.

Dr. Wayne was seated and informed by the Judge that the son from Chicago had arrived a few moments before and would be down shortly.

Mrs. Warfield excused herself and went to the dining room to arrange for another plate.

Dr. Warfield after dressing, slipped downstairs and was enjoying a chat with his mother in the dining room. He hardly felt like leaving to meet Dr. Wayne, who was being entertained by the father.

When Mrs. Warfield and Robert entered the drawing room and Robert was introduced to Dr. Wayne, it was with a great degree of astonishment to both the doctors, in seeing in each other such striking resemblances.

Dr. Warfield when informed by Dr. Wayne that he was associated with Dr. Cardwell at Colton, remembered meeting Dr. Cardwell at the hospital when he administered to "Joe Krable." "Krable," muttered Wayne, "Krable?"—

Mrs. Warfield stepped to the door and announced that dinner was ready.

The trio marched to the dining room, the two doctors being seated opposite each other.

Mrs. Warfield had prepared an elaborate meal and the conversation did not lag for a moment; but this did not keep strange thoughts from running through Dr. Wayne's mind. He was in a state of wonder and perplexity. Was it possible that Judge Warfield was his father? Was it possible that the gracious elderly lady was his mother? Could it be possible the young man, who so closely resembled him was his twin brother? Dr. Wayne pondered the question in his mind with the greatest possible interest and curiosity, meanwhile the other members of the group were set to thinking by the scene.

The hinges of hospitality to this spacious home had always been well oiled, and many guests, some of them being of considerable prominence, had seen the inside of this well appointed dining room. However, none of the other gatherings, large or small, had been of such intense interest to every soul present as was this little party of four.

While it seemed from the very entrance to the dining room, that the mind of each was working most actively, yet not even Raymond had ever dreamed of the startling life secrets that were to be revealed on this never-to-be-forgotten night.

The proper formality of confining the conversation chiefly to the things that were of special interest to Dr. Wayne was at first indulged in, but on account of Dr. Warfield's having been away from home for so long a time, it was most natural that the conversation soon drifted to discussing the events that had transpired since he left home.

When Dr. Wayne was relating the story of his long acquaintance with the Warner family, and of the things that he was interested in, it was interesting to see the expression in the eyes of first one of the Warfield family and then of the other, as they kept catching the close family resemblance to Robert, not only in his appearance, but in his tone of voice as well.

Now that the Warfield's were discussing their own affairs, it gave Raymond more of an opportunity to study them, and he would first glance at Mrs. Warfield and then at the fine features of the Judge, for regardless of the topic of conversation, the uppermost thoughts that were fairly chasing through Raymond's brain, were concerning the secret of his own identity.

He tried to discern some resemblance in the features of Mrs. Warfield, but the unanswered question remained in his mind. Could it be possible that this was his own mother? No, and well, yes, and then, no.

Now he is taking an unobserved glance at the Judge, when all at once, from an unusual sparkle in Raymond's eyes you can plainly read in his mind, that he has solved the great problem to his satisfaction.

Not from anything that was said, but uniting the facts of Robert's being such a perfect likeness of himself and that he knew he had a twin brother somewhere, and now discovering that Judge Warfield actually had the same prominent chin and many of the same facial lines as his son Robert, he is thoroughly convinced, and can now with diffiiculty keep from launching right into the subject.

"Mother," said Robert, "I was just thinking what a strange coincidence, that it is just five years ago tonight since you gave me that little surprise dinner party in this very room, when you invited in a number of my classmates, as a kind of farewell party, just before my graduation, and now you are giving me a surprise dinner party upon my return home."

"Well, Robert, I had not thought of this being upon the anniversary of that little party, but I admit I have had a surprise tonight, as well as have all of us, while you were the only one surprised at the other event," replied Mrs. Warfield.

"That reminds me," said Robert, "speaking of surprises, I have not yet related an incident that happened to me in Chicago while on a crowded street car one day last week. A beautiful young woman started to talk to me, and really asked me a question or two before I could realize that she was intending her talk for me, for I had never seen her before. Wh n I finally recovered sufficiently to tell her that she must be mistaken, she slipped through the crowd and off the car so quickly that I scarcely caught another look at her; however, I'd know her if I ever saw her again; she had such charming eyes. But now since I have met you, Dr. Wayne, I have been wondering if it could not have been one of your friends." Of course it took but a recital of the questions that the young lady had addressed to Dr. Warfield, to establish the identity of Virginia in the mind of Dr. Wayne, and when the Warfields learned that it was no less than the daughter of the great railroad president they were all greatly interested and pleased as well.

"Oh, I've had so many experiences of late," continued Robert, "that I can't think to tell of them all at one time. I may have another surprise package in my traveling bag, too, for I have some papers there that I have not yet opened." Then Dr. Warfield related of his presence at the deathbed of Dutch Joe, and of his placing in his hands the mysterious package. It is needless to state that by the time he had finished telling the strange story the curiosity of all present was such that they could scarcely await the serving of the last course of the dinner, before wanting to see the papers which were as yet unopened.

As soon as dinner was over, Robert rushed upstairs to bring down the package, as Dr. Wayne and Mr. and Mrs. Warfield repaired to the drawing room. Dr. Wayne, all stirred with the events of the evening, almost unconscious of what he was doing, walked over to the mantel and stood face to face with a photograph of no other than Ellen Rhinehart. "Well," exclaimed Dr. Wayne, "is not this a picture of Miss Ellen Rhinehart? And are you acquainted with her?" Being informed that Robert and Ellen had become fast friends while at college, Dr. Wayne remarked that "this is certainly a pretty small old world after all."

By this time Dr. Warfield had returned with the mysterious package, and all gathered round the little square table to learn what this poor illiterate young man had held as a secret and at his death had turned over to Dr. Warfield.

On the wrapper was "Joe Krable to R. W." There was the watch, with the monogram on the back, the same as on the outside of the package.

"Is there anything on the inside to determine who it belonged to?" asked Dr. Wayne. "Nothing but a woman's picture," answered Robert, and the name, Robert Wainright."

"To whom is the envelope addressed?" spoke Wayne. He thought he could see his own name upon it. It read, "Dr. Raymond Wayne, Colton, Ind. care Dr. Cardwell."

"This grows more mysterious every moment!" thought Wayne.

"It's your package, Dr. Wayne, instead of mine," said Robert.

Dr. Wayne opened it—such excitement and anxiety—he had never before experienced. He read,

"Dr. Raymond Wayne,
care Dr. Cardwell,
Colton, Ind.

> "You think you're Raymond Wayne, but you ain't. You be's the son of Mrs. Robert Wainright. When you's twins come to this world, I was your nurse. I took you and left you on Doc. Cardwell's doorstep and then took your twin brother to Bancroft and left him at the parson's—Parson Scott.
>
> "Yer father was a good man, too, and had heaps of money comin' to him, but he married agin his father's wishes and was disowned. He lost his life in a theater fire in Philadelphia by beiin' mashed to death, while at a show given by a great actress, Juanita Lockland.
>
> "This left your poor mother without anything when you's was born.
>
> "When your ma married Tom Rhinehart, she give me her locket and your pa's watch and told me to give you one and one to your twin brother, but made me promise never to give the secret of your birth as long as I lived.
>
> "GRANNY KRABLE."

The reading of this letter made a profound impression on the minds of both brothers. They looked at each other in mutual astonishment as if each wished to express his own feelings.

Said Dr. Wayne, "Doesn't this look as if we were brothers?" to which Dr. Warfield replied, "Certainly these papers seem to indicate that we are."

Robert turned to Mrs. Warfield with a strange look in his eyes, and asked, "Mother, what does all this mean?" The tears were already running down her cheeks and the Judge had turned his face away to avoid showing his emotions.

"Oh, my boy! My dear boy!" cried Mrs. Warfield, "forgive me! Oh, forgive me if I have done wrong in keeping this from you. We have loved you as our own, and when we were almost overcome with the sadness of the death of our little baby boy and Mrs. Scott brought you to us, it seemed almost like a gift from Heaven that saved us from losing all our interest in life."

Seeing that the disclosures could leave no doubt in the minds of all as to their relationship, we will close the doors upon the affecting scene and not attempt to describe, for no pen can describe the feelings of these two stalwart men who as brothers had met for the first time since birth.

There was no sleep in the Warfield home that night until the early morning hours.

Dr. Wayne remained at the Warfield home and on the day following, instead of leaving for Chicago alone, as he had planned, he was accompanied by Robert, and the two brothers started home to have their first interview with their mother and sister.

CHAPTER XV.

In the Overland company's office, things were taking on too serious an aspect, and Mr. Holcomb, not wishing to cause a scene, remarked to Mr. Jamison in a laughing manner "that it looked to him at present that the Overland had joined 'hands' with the Great American."

This timely remark, while it brought color to Virginia's and Hary's faces, had the desired effect.

Mr. Jamison laughed a sneering laugh in response and turning to Mr. Holcomb, said "I see my time is up and I must hurry to catch my train." And without further words turned and left the room.

As the door closed, Mr. Holcomb turned to Virginia and said, "This unfortunate affair is certainly very embarrassing to me, Miss Warner. Do tell me more of your father's condition. To think that I, a lifelong friend, should have caused him such annoyance, grieves me beyond measure."

This turn in affairs was to Virginia both agreeable and unexpected and she, now a little more at ease, told of her father's shock, of her hasty visit to New York, how she had found him much improved, "but greatly disturbed, Mr. Holcomb by your apparent indifference."

"I assured father there must be some mistake, and at last got his permission to come and see you, but not until after he had obtained Dr. Wayne's consent to pilot me safely here."

"Wayne!" exclaimed Harry, "Where is he?" Virginia pointed to the door of the main office, and Harry hurried to meet his friend.

"Miss Warner," said Mr. Holcomb, "your call this morning hos proved a great blessing to me. I now see how I was being led into a trap by this man Jamison, and I shall always feel indebted to you for my escape. Your wishes in regard to correcting the newspaper articles will receive our immediate attention and if you think it wise I will go at once to see your father."

"You are kind indeed, Mr. Holcomb, but as father generally feels more rested in the morning, perhaps a morning call would be better.

"No doubt that would be best," said Mr. Holcomb, "and unless I hear from you that a later call would be advisable, I will see him tomorrow at 10 o'clock."

When Virginia went out into the main office she found Raymond and Harry so deeply interested in their conversation that she was at first unnoticed. "Well, Dr. Wayne," said Virginia, "I am sorry to have kept you waiting so long, but I see you are enjoying yourself."

Yes, indeed, Harry was just telling me of the good times you folks had last summer at father's." Virginia tried to assume an unconcerned air, but her face lighted up for a moment with the old-time light that Harry had not seen since they were so happy at Colton.

"How long will you be in the city, Miss Warner?" said Harry.

"We will return home as soon as father's business can be arranged satisfactorily. I am anxious to get the settlement building well under way, if not completed, before we go to Washington for the aviation week celebration next fall. Father has a dear friend there who has invited us to come, and as father's friend's son, Lieutenant Harvey Covington, writes of the great times they are having down at Fort Wayne at the aeroplane testing grounds, I am anxious to go, as I have always had a mad desire to make a flight. But you surely know the danger connected with these flights?" said Harry, trying to act unconcerned. "Yes, but that only adds to the enjoyment," answered Virginia, with a look of triumph on her face, for she had noted the change that had come over Harry's countenance when she had mentioned "father's friend's son"—"And, Dr. Wayne," she continued "we must hurry back to father. He will be anxious about us."—"That's so," said Raymond, and with a formal "Good afternoon, Mr. Holcomb," Virginia turned and left the office.

Virginia said but little on the way home, only once breaking the silence by saying, "I have good news for father, and I hope to find him ready for it."

Raymond understood by this that her visit had been satisfactory, but asked no questions.

"When they reached the hospital, the nurse explained to Virginia that her father had had quite a nervous spell after she went away, but had at last dozed off into a restful sleep. "I am so glad," said Virginia, "for he will awake refreshed ready for the good news I have for him."

Raymond excused himself, saying he would call tomorrow, but added, "If there is anything I can do for you at any time, do not hesitate to call me."

While Virginia waited for her father to awake, she spent the time in writing to Mary and Ellen. How happy she was to be able to tell them conditions were so favorable.

When Mr. Warner awoke, Virginia was sitting by his side, and as she related her experiences of the morning a satisfied expression stole over his face, as he drank in her every word.

Virginia spent the remainder of the afternoon reading to her father, and when she left him for the night it was with a feeling that tomorrow would find him much improved.

The next morning found Mr. Warner in fine spirits, and when Mr. Holcomb arrived at the hospital, he was shown at once to Mr. Warner's room. Before the close of their conference it was fully determined that they would purchase the stock of the Central Union line on the option held by Mr. Warner. It was also agreed that at the next directors' meeting they would propose the consolidation of the Great American and Overland railways.

During the time intervening between this and the directors' meeting Harry had the opportunity of being with Virginia quite often, and it was an opportunity he made the most of. In the position he now held, he did not have to hide his identity nor to conceal the fact that he was able to entertain her in a most lavish manner.

In spite of the good times Virginia was having, she had not forgotten her cherished desire for building the settlement house, and she lost no opportunity, when occasion warranted, of dropping a word to her father about the matter. Occasional letters from Mary kept her in touch with the work at home, and brought news from Ellen and of her mother's failing health.

As the train hurried the two doctors on toward Chicago, strange thoughts were passing through their minds. Robert had never seen Mrs. Rhinehart, and many were the questions he asked about his mother. Now that Raymond knew that Mrs. Rhinehart was his own mother, he seemed to long to go to her immediately with the thought of caring for her with the true love of a son. It is magnificent to be a skilful and successful physician and be able to relieve the physical ills of humanity; however it is better to be a noble man than to be a physician. Raymond Wayne was both. He of course knew that Mrs. Rhinehart lacked in many of the finer qualities, but because he never spoke ill of any one, he did not mention her lack of culture to Robert.

"It seems strange to me," said Raymond, "that Ellen never noticed our resemblance."—"That is easily explained," said Robert, "when I was in school, I had a smooth face and I have never seen her since. While I understand that she has never seen you without a beard." "O, yes," said Raymond, "I had never thought of that. We will see if she recognizes you when we get home."

At six o'clock that evening, Mary received a telegram from Raymond stating that he would arrive in Chicago the next morning at nine o'clock. "O, Ellen!" said Mary, "I don't suppose he would get the message I sent telling about your mother's sudden collapse, but it's all for the best anyway, as he will be here so soon."

When Ellen decided to return at once to Chicago with her mother for further consultation in regard to her impaired health, she planned wiser than she knew, for her mother's condition continued daily to grow worse rather than to improve. Poor Ellen! Although rested and refreshed by her short stay at Virginia's, was not wholly prepared for the long days and nights of anxious watching at her mother's bedside, and when Mary went to Chicago to be with Ellen, she was shocked to see the great change that had come over her friend. In place of the once bright and happy Ellen, she was now in a state of despondency and gloom that was depressing and pathetic.

Mrs. Rhinehart did not know Mary at first, but that morning she seemed to recognize her for a few moments. She apparently remembered that she had intended giving Dr. Wayne her secret, but fearing that on account of her condition she would not be able to explain it to him; and knowing the affection that existed between Mary and Dr. Wayne, she decided to tell her the secret. Calling Mary to her she said, "I have something to say to you, Mary. The secret of my life—" But this sentence was never finished, as she fell back on her pillow apparently lifeless. The doctor was hastily summoned, and in the meantime the girls did all in their power to restore her.

When the doctor arrived he pronounced it a slight stroke of paralysis, but did not tell them the serious nature of her attack, as he saw they were greatly frightened. "If Raymond were only here now," thought Mary, "how he could help us."

Morning came with little change in Mrs. Rhinehart's condition. Mary, fearing Raymond had not received her message, decided to go to the station to meet him thinking he might go direct to Colton. The message, however, had been wired back in care of the train, and was handed to him before they pulled into the Union station. "O how sorry I am," said Raymond, "I was in hopes mother would be better and ready for the little surprise we had for her."

On arrival, Raymond was trying to assist a woman who had a Roosevelt family, with her luggage, and Robert was the first to leave the train. Imagine his surprise when a young woman rushed up to him, threw her arms about his neck, and cried, "O, I am so glad you have come at last!" Before Robert could say a word, Raymond stepped to Mary and said, "Why, sister, what are you doing?" Mary stepped back in astonishment. "Mary," said Raymond, "I am not at all surprised at your mistake. This is my own twin brother, Robert, of whom you have never heard. I will tell you more about him later. But now do tell me how mother—I mean Ellen's mother—is. I just received your telegram since we entered the city. Shan't we go to them at once?" and caling a taxicab, they were soon at their home.

Ellen answered the bell. Raymond seeing her look of astonishment, was the first to speak, "Miss Rhinehart, this is my brother, Robert." "Ellen you should have seen the beautiful mistake I made at the station," said Mary as they entered the sitting room, "but if Robert is Raymond's own twin brother, I don't see that my mistake was so serious, for if he is Raymond's brother he is mine, too.

"How is your mother, Ellen?" said Raymond.— "Mother slept very little last night, and as she has just gone to sleep I thought we would better wait here until she awakes." Raymond, however, was so anxious to see his mother that he said, "Sometimes doctors can judge better of a patient's condition when she is asleep, and, with your permission, we will slip in quietly and see her."

"O, Ellen," said Mary, after the doctors had left the room, "don't you feel like a big load of responsibility had been lifted from your shoulders? I do." "How do you suppose Raymond found out that Robert was his brother? I wonder where he found him? It all seems so strange."

When Raymond and Robert looked upon the face of their mother, it was hard for them to control their emotions for they saw that it was a question of but a few days that she would be with them.

When the boys returned to the sitting room, Raymond said, "Girls, we had a surprise in store for mother, but I am afraid she will never know of it." "Raymond, why do you call Mrs. Rhinehart mother?" said Mary. "This is growing more mysterious every minute." The boys looked at each other for a minute, then Robert said, "Raymond, you are better acquainted with the facts, you tell them our story."

When Raymond had finished both girls were in tears—a combination of tears of joy and tears of sadness. While Ellen had lost whom sre supposed to be her lover, she had gained two brothers, and while Mary had lost a brother, she could now see in Raymond more than a brother. "Only yesterday," said Ellen, "I seemed so alone in the world with no ray of light to illumine my path, while now I have two brothers to comfort and help me." "But who will comfort me?" said Mary. Raymond took her hand in his and, pressing it to his lips, said, "You shall not be neglected."

"Won't mother and father be surprised when they come this evening?" said Mary. "Not so much, perhaps, as you were, for they knew why I went to New York. I know they will be glad I have solved the mystery."

The next morning Ellen received the following letter from Virginia:

> "My dear Ellen:—
>
> "Your good letter received, but we were grieved to hear of your mother's critical condition. How glad I am Mary can be with you, and I suppose by this time Raymond and Robert are with you, too. How overjoyed you must have been when the mystery was explained. You are a dear sweet girl and deserve much.
>
> "And, oh! I have another surprise in store for you. Father told me this morning he was so well pleased with the turn in his business affairs that he wanted me to write to you at once and tell you he had set aside $50,000 to be used for the construction of the settlement building. I shall be home soon as I am anxious to get things started as soon as possible.
>
> "I have written to Mr. Smith, a real estate agent, in whom father has much confidence, asking him to get an option on our proposed location. I think I told you I wanted the ground on which the tenement house stood where poor Ned Sherley was killed.
>
> "O, Ellen, I am so happy. I will have so much to tell you and Mary when I see you. Till then, believe me your true friend,
>
> VIRGINIA."

Ellen was of course overjoyed with the good news that the letter contained. To think that the ideal that she had looked forward to for so long was to materialize, and that she was really to have a settlement building, gave her more pleasure than had she received news that she was to receive the money for herself.

In New York, Mr. Warner and Virginia were preparing for their homeward journey. At the directors' meeting things had been carried out as Mr. Warner and Mr. Holcomb had planned, the two companies being consolidated. Mr. Warner was made president and Harry Holcomb vice president and manager. Mr. Holcomb, Sr., wishing to retire from active service, accepted the position of chairman of the board of directors.

Just as Mr. Warner and Virginia were entering their private car to start for home, a telegraph messenger came rushing up with a telegram and handed it to Mr. Warner. Thinking perhaps it might be something requiring attention before leaving the city, he hastily opened it and read:

> "Mother died this morning at ten o'clock. Funeral Monday afternoon.
> "RAYMOND WAINRIGHT."

Mr. Warner handed Virginia the message, and hurriedly wrote this reply:

> "We will arrive tomorrow morning at nine o'clock.
> "JAMES WARNER."

Virginia seeing her father was much moved did not speak. When at last the long silence was broken. Mr. Warner said, "How fortunate we had planned to go at this time. I hope we may be of some assistance to Ellen—Poor child, she has surely had her share of troubles." Virginia broke the next silence by asking her father if they couldn't take Ellen home with them after all was over. "I know she is completely worn out and after she is rested she can help us in our planning about the building."—"You may do as you like, my daughter, but we'd better not plan too far ahead at present."

Six weeks have passed, Mr. Warner and Virginia are seated alone in the family sitting room. Virginia looked up and said, "It seems rather lonesome tonight, doesn't it, daddy, with Ellen gone, but I am so glad she could go back to the Presbyterian hospital to finish her course. She is so ambitious, and now that Robert is there permanently she will not be lonesome. What a help she was to us in our planning the building, but then no one knows the needs more than she does. I wonder if Raymond has made up his mind to remain at Colton?" "I think he has," said Mr. Warner, "from what he said to me the other evening. Dr. Cardwell wants him to remain, in fact really needs him."—"Well, it is nice for all of us to be so close together, for we do have nice times," said Virginia.

"By the way, daughter, Mr. Ware told me this morning that the tearing down of the old tenement house would be completed today and that work on the foundation would begin tomorrow. We were certainly fortunate in securing that property at such a low figure. The money saved in this way you may use for furnishing the building.

These were happy days for Virginia. Mr. Warner not having so many business cares as formerly, had more time to spend with his daughter, and they enjoyed many happy hours together. Now they were to be in Chicago while the building was being erected.

During the summer a great deal of time was spent in looking after details of construction, yet many pleasant days were passed at the Cardwell home together with Ellen and her two brothers. Harry's visits though necessarily short were frequent, and as Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell watched the young people they remarked to each other that they were glad Harry and Virginia had cleared up all their misunderstandings and were even happier than they were last summer.

Virginia had been so taken up with her work she had not realized that the summer was nearly gone. One evening when they were all at Dr. Cardwell's, some one said, "Virginia, I thought you were going to Washington this fall to the celebration?" "I certainly am," said Virginia, "and I want this whole crowd to go with me. Isn't that right daddy?" "I think that was what we planned,' said Mr. Warner, "if they will go." "Of course they will go," said Virginia, "Ellen will have finished her course by then and will need a little rest before taking up her work again; Robert can get away for one week; and I think Mary and Raymond have been planning to take some kind of a trip."

"My," said Dr. Cardwell, "Virginia can plan things in a hurry. When does the celebration happen?"

"I guess there is need for hurry," said Mr. Warner, "as the celebration begins on the 24th, and this is the 10th."—"That will give us just two weeks. We will all be ready except Harry. His last letter said he was afraid an important business engagement at that time would keep him from joining us."

"Now don't look so disheartened, Virginia," said Dr. Cardwell, "I understand Harry is making quite a name for himself and you know you wouldn't have him neglect his business." "No—but then I am disappointed just the same."

The next evening at the supper table Raymond said "Mother, Mary and I have been doing a little planning today, but we want to take you into our confidence and get your advice. You know we had decided to be married the 14th of next month; but if we are to go with the Warners to Washington, wouldn't it be a little surprise for Virginia if we should be married just before going to Chicago to join them? We had planned to have a very quiet wedding anyway. What do you think of the idea?"

Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell remained silent for some time. Mrs. Cardwell at last said, "We certainly want you to do as you think best, and your plan seems a good one; but I thought you wanted Virginia to be at the wedding." "We did think so at first, but now seem to favor our new plan.'

Those two weeks were busy times for the girls, and Virginia did not take time to run out to Colton, knowing Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell expected to go to Chicago to see them off. It was therefore an easy thing for Mary to keep her secret.

In the meantime Mrs. Cardwell was also very busy, even if the wedding was to be a very quiet affair she was looking after every detail, leaving nothing undone she could do to make the wedding of her only daughter a delightful occasion. Everything was to be as carefully arranged as if they were expecting many guests.

Ellen and Robert were also kept in ignorance of the wedding, but were invited down to the Cardwells for dinner the day they were to start. Wishing to have a little time to visit with the Cardwells, they decided to take the train that would get them to Colton at 9:30

in the morning. Just as they were ready to start a fine looking old man stepped up to Robert and said, "Is this Dr. Robert Warfield?"—"Yes, sir," said Robert, "but I don't think I remember you."—"I guess not," said the old gentleman, "you have not seen me since you were a few weeks' old. My name is Scott—Rev. Scott. I was pastor of your father's church when you lived at Bancroft."—"Well, well," said Robert, "can it be possible that to you and your good wife I am indebted to for the good father, mother, and home I have had since babyhood? I did not find out until about six months ago that Judge and Mrs. Warfield were not my own father and mother. How glad I am to see you, Mr. Scott. How did you know I was living in Chicago?"

"I was reading a Chicago paper and saw the article stating that you had been appointed as one of the doctors at the Presbyterian hospital, and as it gave your father's name, I was sure you were the same Robert Warfield we once had known, so determined when I came to the city to look you up. How are your father and mother? I suppose you hear from them frequently?"

"Yes, and I was in New York about six months ago to see them. This was the time I learned of my identity. Perhaps you never knew I had a twin brother? Well, I have, and this young lady (turning to Ellen) is my sister, Miss Rhinehart."

"I am certainly glad to have met you, Dr. Warfield, but I must go now, as I want to take the 9:30 train to Bancroft. I hope to meet you sometime again."

"We will go when you do, Mr. Scott, as we take the same train out to Colton. This will give us a little more time to get acquainted." "Colton," said Rev. Scott, "Do you know Dr. Cardwell?"—"That is where we are going, Bro. Scott. My twin brother, Raymond, was left at Dr. Cardwell's the same night I was left at your house." "Indeed," said Rev. Scott, "I never heard of this, and Dr. Cardwell was our own family physician. But then we left Bancroft just after it happened, which I suppose is the reason. I want to see Dr. Cardwell myself and believe I will stop off at Colton between trains, if it won't interfere with your plans."—"Certainly not," said Robert, "we will be glad to have you."

Having missed the early train it was 11 o'clock before they reached the Cardwell home. Mrs. Cardwell received them at the door, and was greatly surprised to see Rev. Scott. Ellen was the first to notice that the house was beautifully decorated and asked Mrs. Cardwell what was going to happen.

"I am afraid nothing would have happened if you had not brought Rev. Scott with you, as our minister's daughter just telephoned that her father was taken suddenly ill and could not perform the ceremony. Your coming, Bro. Scott, seems providential as our daughter Mary was to be married at 12 noon. We shall be delighted to have you perform the ceremony." To this he readily assented. During this conversation, Ellen made a run for upstairs to find Mary.

An hour later the Cardwell home was the scene of a pretty home wedding, the first that had ever been solemnized under this roof.

The two private cars (one being President Warner's and the other Harry Holcomb's) were in the finest order possibl when they were attached to the Limited in the Chicago station Thursday evening. Every piece of brass seemed to have an extra polish and the porters looked as if they also had received an extra grooming.

Mr. Warner and Virginia were the first to arrive, but had no more than entered the car when Robert and Ellen were seen coming through the station gates. Raymond and Mary arrived just as the conductor was calling "All aboard!"

Everyone seemed to be in fine spirits and it was a jolly party that was now on its way to the National capital to spend a week's vacation. Neither Ellen nor Robert had ever been to Washington before, so the other members of the party had considerable sport joking them about the wonderful things they were going to show them.

As the conversation grew a little less hilarious, Mary said, "We are going to have wedding cake to dream on tonight; a young lady was married at Colton this noon and I have enough cake for us all." It took Virginia but a moment to see through it all, and clasping Mary in her arms she cried as if her heart would break. "Why, Virginia," said her father, "What is the matter?"—"Oh, nothing, father, I am just foolish, but I can tell you now why I kept finding rice on the floor."

It was now Raymond's time to act, and taking Mary by the hand, he introduced her to Mr. Warner as "Mrs. Raymond Wainwright." "This is indeed a surprise," said Mr. Warner, "but you certainly have my congratulations and best wishes, and I don't see any thing to cry about at all, Virginia."

As the train stopped at Ft. Wayne, the porter came in with a telegram addressed to Dr. Wainright. On opening it he read as follows:

> "Message received and father joins me in wishing you and Mrs. Wainright everything good. I further extend my sympathy for having to be with such a frivolous crowd on your first journey.
>
> "HARRY."

Virginia received the next telegram, and in all Harry enlivened the party with no less than seven messages on the way which helped some to make up for his enforced absence.

The many interesting incidents of the trip to Washington need not be described here, but as Ellen kept a diary we may at some future time be given a chance to read it. During this trip, however, she emphatically refused to allow any of the party to read it, preferring to wait until she could get home and dress it up.

As the train pulled into the fine new Union station at Washington, they were all ready and eager to get off and to the hotel for even the best of train accommodations soon become irksome.

As they passed through the station Robert made several complimentary remarks about the beauty of the building, which Mr. Warner explained was one of the finest in the country, costing four million dollars.

At the station gates they were met by Mr. Covington and his son Harvey. They were soon all seated in Lieutenant Covington's six cylinder Mitchell, with the exception of Mr. Covington, who stated that he had some matters to attend to but would see them all at dinner.

A few minutes' time brought them up to the Arlington where all of the party were comfortably housed, and then Lieutenant Covington took Mr. Warner and Virginia on to their home, first telling the rest of the party he would be around with his car again about five o'clock to take a little drive before going to dinner at their home.

The following day Lieutenant Covington took the party in his car to Ft. Meyer to the aeroplane testing ground. Virginia did not tell her secret to the rest of the party—about her having made an agreement with Harvey to take a flight in his aeroplane. By so doing she avoided many warnings of danger with which she knew she would otherwise be bothered.

When Harvey had everything in readiness he gave Virginia a quick sign, and she stepped in without the least hesitation and took her seat beside him, and before the rest of the party were aware of what was happening, they were off.

Virginia waved her hand to them as they ascended, but did not see that just at that moment Harry Holcomb came rushing up just in time to see her being carried up into the air.

CHAPTER XVI.

The great ungainly form of the areoplane, the hideous grinding and scraping sound of the machinery heard overhead, and the altogether unusual aspect sent a thrill of excitement through every spectator, and especially was this feeling intensified in the minds of those directly interested in Virginia Warner, who had startled and astounded every member of her party by her unwonted display of daring and recklessness. Not a word was spoken by any member of her party. The unspeakable surprise, fear, and solicitude for Virginia's safety was so plainly written on every face that words would have been superfluous. Higher and higher rose the aeroplane, and farther and farther away it swept, bearing Virginia Warner and Harvey Covington on their reckless flight. Mr. Warner whose nerves had withstood the shock of many terrific encounters in the business world, now somewhat enfeebled by age and his recent illness, stood stark and stiff with amazement.

Harry Holcomb's emotions were of a somewhat mixed quality. Added to the surprise at this most unexpected occurrence, was his fear for Virginia's safety and his disappontment at not receiving the warm greeting from her which he had madly anticipated during his entire journey from New York. There was the sting of jealousy at the sight of his own Virginia seated beside that handsome stranger in his dazzling uniform. High minded and generous as Harry Holcomb was, he could not escape that sting, nor could he quite conceal his feelings, so plainly were these emotions depicted in his countenance.

Shouts and exclamations from the crowd, distracting remarks, and the general commotion had but little effect to break the spell that had taken possession of the friends of Virginia Warner. One incident, however, occurred of such an unusual nature and so ludicrous of its kind that it took the attention of many from the flying machine and directed it to an old darkey whose antiquated and dilapidated appearance was exceeded only by that of the old clay colored mule and the rickety cart which he drove, who at sight of the areoplane, set up a most hideous wail, which attracted the attention of every one near. "Oh Lord a' Massie!"

groaned the old man, as he fell on his knees, clasping his hands and wringing them in deepest agony, "Dar's Gabriel comin' this blessed minute. I d'n' no mo' 'spect 'im today nor a rabbit. Oh Lord! Massie Gabriel, help me! help me! I dun stole dat chicken, but I neber did eat 'im. Kase, Lord a Massie, dat air bird had mo' quill fedders dan a crow and Dina neber did get dem fedders out. Don' bring dat chicken up afore de judgment day, kase I neber d'd eat 'im. An' tell de good Lord to forgib me, and will gib you half o' dat chickin when it's done."

Aroused from his abstractions by the movement of the crowd, the old darky looked up and seeing the aeroplane a mere speck in the distance, slowly got up from the ground muttering the following soliloquy: "I sure thought dat air was Massa Gabriel come to take us to the judgment day, but I guess it wa'nt. It sure was someick as I neber seed afore. I guess it was jest a 'hant.' He didn't hab no trumpet nohow. Bress de Lord! I's mighty glad dat 't wa'n't Massa Gabriel, kase dat air chickin mus' be bout done cooked now. I'se gwine home and eat 'im fore nothin' else happens, so I is."

The ludicrous figure, and the old man's dilemma did not fail to attract the attention of some of the party, and instilled enough merriment into their minds to break the spell and loosen their tongues. Mr. Warner was the first to speak. "I wish Virginia had taken a heavier wrap," he remarked, "the air will certainly be cool at that altitude." At this moment the aeroplane was making the turn just over the Washington monument, and headed back toward the fort. Rapidly it came nearer and nearer, and with the precision of an eagle swooping down upon his prey the aeroplane made its descent and lighted only a few paces from where it started.

With undisguised eagerness and a long breath of relief, Harry Holcomb rushed forward to assist Virginia to alight. "Virginia," he said—it was all he could say. "Why, Harry Holcomb! where did you come from. Did you drop out of the clouds," said Virginia somewhat agitated. "No, it is not I that has dropped from the clouds," said Harry curtly. "Mr. Holcomb, will you meet Lieutenant Covington who has been acting as my sky pilot for the last half hour," said Virginia. "With much more pleasure than I had anticipated a few minutes ago," said Harry, grasping the lieutenant's hand.

Following the lead of Mr. Warner's coolness of manner, none of the party gave utterance to any expession of surprise regarding the unusual occurrence. "You made very good time, lieutenant," remarked Dr. Warfield, "I am glad you did not keep us waiting longer."—"Thanks," said the lieutenant, "the machine did work well today."—"It is near lunch time," said Mary, and I suggest that we return to the city at once. All were agreed and the party was soon on the way, each thankful in his own mind that the events of the morning had been concluded so favorably.

The work of consolidating and reorganizing three great railroads into one economic system, was a task of gigantic proportions, which kept Harry Holcomb in his office constantly for many weeks. This work had fallen heavily upon Harry's shoulders, since Mr. Warner the president had not fully recovered his health and could not assume the active duties of the office. Added to this, Harry had discovered a plot laid by Mr. Jamison which was intended to compass the ruin of both Mr. Warner and Harry. This intrepid schemer had formed a pool in Wall Street to quietly accumulate sufficient stock in the consolidated railroads to control the board of directors thus causing the removal of both the Holcombs and Mr. Warner from the board of directors and placing himself at the head of the system. In thwarting this scheme, Harry had shown himself easily master of the situation, and he had emerged from the struggle not only with flying colors, but with a handsome increase of the Holcomb and Warner holdings, and had seen the Jamison pool collapse and a treacherous enemy forever removed from his field of action.

Mr. Warner, Mr. Holcomb, and Harry all members of the board of directors of the new settlement enterprise, having been so preoccupied with other matters, the meeting of this board had been somewhat delayed. which gave Ellen ample time to prepare an outline of her plans for the settlement work, and to be able to make a clear statement of the needs for carrying out her ideas. The day of the meeting finally arrived and after the preliminary business of organizing and arranging for undertaking the work. Ellen was called upon for her statement and outline of plans; for it had been understood that this was Ellen's work and that her plans were to be followed as far as possible. She had therefore given it much thought and careful study.

The location had been decided upon and the ground purchased but Mr. Ware, the architect, had not been able to proceed with his work until a definite plan had been adopted. Ellen began by a statement of her ideas of the work to be undertaken. "Here," she said is to be located a home in the most wretched part of the city, where vice is rampant and where crime is not uncommon; where human needs are greatest, and where ignorance almost precludes improvement; where anything like decent home life is unknown, and where sanitary conditions are intolerable; where disease and pestilence fester in concealment, and where everything repugnant to refinement of taste and culture is flaunted abroad. Here men and women of high ideals are to live in constant and immediate contact with these wretched people and in their polluted environment. Here the example of the meek and lowly Nazarene shall be followed. Every dweller in this house shall be willing to give of his own life and powers according to the abundance which he has received. He shall live as a neighbor to the vicious and criminal, and by his life and conduct exert an influence that will tend to elevate and better all mankind. He shall visit the sick and the suffering, and with his own hands he shall pluck the thorns from the flesh that has been pierced and bind up their wounds, and speak a word of cheer. To the erring and the fallen, he shall be merciful and kind; and, with an outstretched hand, he shall lift them up. And he shall teach these people the better way of life. The workers of this settlement shall be women whose lives are consecrated to the principle of doing good at all times. Classes must be organized and societies formed to help these primitive beings with distorted mentality into a higher life, but the club man or woman, even of brilliant minds and abundant wealth, who is fearful of contamination or who is loath to use his own hands, can help them not at all. Gentlemen this is the real work of the Master, and as He freely gave of Himself, so must we. This work will cost much in courage; faith, patience, perseverance, and physical energy; but it is surely worth the while. We have freely received, we will freely give.

The simple earnestness of this plain self-sacrificing and unassuming girl, as she told of the work to which her life was dedicated, touched these men of affairs, and moved them deeply. They had caught a glimpse of something unknown in the sordid business world—a pure, unselfish motive, actuating a simple, devoted life was to them a novel and an unusual thing. Here was business to be done upon a different basis from that of running a railroad. They were being shown ideals so much higher than those they were wont to entertain, that they were completely carried away.

"By this magnificent generosity of Mr. Warner's," Ellen continued, but was interrupted by the gentleman named, who said, "That donation was from Virginia, but I would like to be in this for the same amount." "Here, too," said Mr. Holcomb, whose gaze had been rivited upon Ellen all the while she had been speaking, "There are dividends in sight there that I don't want to miss. Put me down for fifty thousand and lay your plans broad, for as long as the Consolidated Railroads can earn the money this settlement business shall not want for funds."

Ellen was speechless with astonishment for a moment, but regaining her composure she said simply, "Gentlemen, I thank you.—The needs for this enterprise will necessarily be large; however, we shall have no salaried workers. This work will be done by unpaid volunteers."—"What!" said Mr. Holcomb, "Do you expect to keep that line running and pay less than the standard scale of wages?" "We pay the standard scale on our lines, and then have our hands full avoiding strikes at that."—"We shall have no strikes, Mr. Holcomb," said Ellen. "We have now on our waiting list applicants for this work for more than a year ahead. The most of them are willing to pay their own board and give three months' time to the work." "Great heavens!" said Mr. Holcomb, "where have I been living all these years? I began to feel the need of settlement work myself.—Will you have a class for railroad presidents? if so I want to to be the first enrolled."—"I believe we have you down already, Mr. Holcomb," said Ellen with a smile.

"Miss Rhinehart can you give us some idea of what will be needed in the way of a building?" said Mr. Warner, anxious to see the work begun.

"I have my ideas, Mr. Warner, but have never dared to dream of realizing them now. We shall need living rooms for the workers, and if you will permit me I will speak what has been in my mind, but am ready to cheerfully accept any limits which you may set. Besides the living rooms for the workers we shall need a kitchen and a dining room large enough to seat a hundred at one time, for this will be the center of the neighborhood and we shall serve banquets and have neighborhood celebrations here from time to time. Besides a sufficient reception room or parlor, we should have several small club rooms, so that each nationality may have a place to meet and enjoy, in their own particular way, the association of their friends. Thus German, French Italian, Irish and Slavs may gather here and gradually become amalgamated into one great American citizenship. Some local talent may be secured to address them upon simple every day subjects in their own language. The women may be gathered in in the afternoon and taught many things about home making. They may be taught simple and economic cooking, plain sewing, cutting and fitting and even music. We shall need a large auditorium where all may gather for lectures or concerts, where musical or dramatic entertainment may be given."

At the mention of dramatic entertainments, Mr. Warner gave a little start, then looking around to see if he was observed, finally returned his full attention to Ellen without comment.

"We shall need a gymnasium," Ellen continued, "and two large and completely equipped bath rooms, for unless we provide means for bathing these people they will continue to live and die unwashed. We shall need a well equipped dispensary with two small wards where an unfortunate and suffering creature may be taken in and cared for for a day or a night. Upon the roof of the building could be arranged a roof garden or play ground where the children of that crowded neighborhood could get a little sunshine and fresh air. This, gentlemen, is a rough outline of the needs for a work such as we have contemplated. I do not expect such a building. I have not dared to hope for it, but this is my ideal."

"Gentlemen," said Mr Holcomb, rising to his feet, "It has never been the policy of my road to skimp an equipment when it was certain that the business was along the line. We never found it profitable to buy pony engines when moguls were needed. I am satisfied that this is not a pony business. I believe there is business on that line, and I am in favor of building for tomorrow." "I should think," said Mr. Warner, cooly, "that it would be wise to embody in our plans about what Miss Rhinehart has indicated, ad I would suggest that Mr. Ware be instructed to confer with Miss Rhinehart and submit to us a plan for such a building." It was agreed to and at a subsequent meeting the plans were adopted and the work of construction was soon begun.

Following a strenuous day with the board of directors of the consolidated railroad Harry Holcomb sat in the lobby of the Waldorf Astor hotel dreamily going over the business of the day, when his attention was attracted by a very graceful and elegantly dressed gentleman at the farther end of the hall. Watching the figure indifferently for a few minutes Harry was aroused from his dreamy mood by an impression that there was something familiar about the person he had been observing. "I have surely seen that man before now," he said to himself. His movements are very familiar to me." A moment later the stranger stopped directly in front of him; their eyes met; Harry sprang to his feet with an expression of surprise and delight. "By the jumping Jehosephat," exclaimed Harry, "If this isn't George Thornton. From what corner of the world do you hail now?"—"I came in on the Oceanic today," said George, "and how is my old friend Harry, and how about those charming Vassar girls, with whom we spent that delightful summer? Let me see how long ago was that? It seems an age to me."—"I am quite well," replied Harry, "and as for the girls, one is married, and the other has grown more charming every day."—"Which one is married?" asked George eagerly,"—"Mary Cardwell, she married Dr. Raymond Wainright, or Raymond Wayne, as you knew him," said Harry. George Thornton was silent, and without further questioning about the people he had met at Colton, remarked "that he had an appointment to meet some people at eight o'clock and it only lacked five minutes of that hour."—"But you are not going to leave me the moment I find you old boy? I could spend half the night talking over old times with you."—"I should be delighted to spend the evening with you, Harry, but I must meet a committee of the International Art Association of which I am chairman."—"You must be getting on well in the world of art, Thornton," said Harry, "I have often heard your work spoken of and see an occasional reference to you in the London Times."—"I was chosen by the Continental Art Society, which met in Paris, to come to New York, for this conference with some American artists I must finish this work in time to return on the Oceanic in three days."—"What, return so soon?" exclaimed Harry in amazement. "I was just thinking that I would take you to Chicago with me next week and we would run down to Colton just for the sake of old times, but if you must return so soon, that will be out of the question, but look here, George Thornton, Miss Warner and I are to be married at Christmas time, and I want you to be best man."—"I congratulate you, Harry, from the bottom of my heart," said George, "and will be on time at the wedding without fail. A little trip over from Paris will be nothing for such an event, and I assure you that I shall be delighted to come. But I must go now, Harry, bear my most sincere regards to Miss Warner, and I will see you Christmas eve. Good night."—"Good night, Thornton. Don't you dare to disappoint me."—"I shall be as certain in my course as is Jupiter, who leads me," said Thornton, "and I will invoke the favor of Juno upon this occasion, Aurevoir."

Ellen Rhinehart sat in her office in the new settlement building deep in meditation upon the great work before her. The magnificent building was complete, and all the equipment was in place. Every department was as complete as modern architectural skill could devise. Miss Bennett had come to her with some of her best workers and Dr. Wainright and Warfield were in charge of the dispensary, and everything was well organized and in good working order. Old Jack

Hinston had left his engine on account of slightly failing eyesight and was now installed as house man, in charge of the building and grounds. The people of the neighborhood had ceased to show their opposition to the settlement work, and many of them had come in to the classes and joined the clubs, and were much interested in the movement.

While the building was in the process of construction, many threats had been heard that "fire would fix that thing," and "smoke would drive out them fine fellers." Little Jacob, son of Israel, had heard Tom Colton say that he would shy a brick through the first window they put in. "Maw says them fine haired folks can't come in here tryin' to boss us."—"Look here Tom," said Jacob, "that air is Miss Rhinehart's house—Miss Rhinehart wat brung the good eaten to Esaw afore he croaked. Now you mind how as I fixed your mug last year for buttin' in. Now if I see you touch so much as a gravel about this house, you'll have to wear a tater for a mug the rest of your days,kase they won't be none on your front, when I git's through wid ye."

All seemed to be harmonious now, and Ellen was very happy in the realization of her dream. The door opened, and Virginia entered, flushed from her brisk walk in the chilly air. "How cosy you are here Ellen," she said, after the first friendly greeting. "I am beginning to love this place even better than my own home I believe. Do you know what I have been thinking of, Ellen? Conventional lines never did mean much to me you know. I have written to Harry and told him that I would like to be married right here in this house of yours. What do you say?"—"Nothing would please me more, Virginia,and I don't see what there is to hinder," said Ellen with delight. "You can have the exclusive use of the auditorium and banquet hall, and I can have the other halls vacated for one evening."—"No indeed," replied Virginia, "I mean to come in here without much ado, have a quiet wedding, and let these people come or go as they please; provide dinner for all who come, and keep no one away."—"Just as you like, Virginia, I am at your command, and I am sure Harry will not object." —"But I have just received a letter from him, Ellen. He says that he has seen George Thornton in New York. He says he never saw a more refined and gentlemanly appearing fellow than George. It seems that his visit to New York had something to do with the International Art Exhibit, which is now on there. Harry went over to see it, and found that the first place on the list of exhibits has been given to a series representing the characters in Tennyson's Idyles of the Kings, by George Thornton, and the crowds are going wild over his representation of Elaine, and Harry says that the face and figure is an exact likeness of Mary Cardwell. And, do you know, she wrote me a long time ago that she was sitting for him to paint that picture, but I had forgotten all about it until this letter came. Only think of it, Ellen, our Mary as Elaine in a world beater, and our friend Thornton, the artist. A very pleasant sequence to that summer at Colton, isn't it?"—"I am delighted to hear that, Virginia," said Ellen, "but do you know I always thought there was something more than platonic friendship in that affair. I believe that George Thornton was dead in love with Mary and that his departure from here was hastened because he dared not stay longer lest his attention be diverted from his studies, so high an ideal had he set for his life work."—"And we shall see him at Christmas time, Ellen, for he is to be here at the wedding."—"How delightful," said Ellen, "and it is only four weeks from tomorrow."

The snow had been falling all day on the pavement and piling up in little heaps on the window ledges. Whirling gusts of wind sent blinding puffs before the window out of which Virginia Warner had been gazing intently. She had gone to the window a hundred times that afternoon looking out as if expecting to see something, but each time returning with a restless look, and went about in a slightly agitated manner. She knew that Harry could not arrive before five o'clock, yet long before the clock struck three, she had been to the window many times looking down the walk toward the gate. It was now six o'clock; the lights on the streets were burning with a dim glow, ad Harry had not yet arrived. "What a dreadful storm this is," she said to herself. "I am always afraid of collisions in these blinding storms, I wish Harry would come. What would I do if"—and she stopped suddenly as if frightened at the thought. But just at that moment she caught a glimpse of some one coming slowly up the walk, through the deep snow. "There is Harry this minute," she said, "I wonder why he is walking in this dreadful storm?" and she ran down to meet him, all excitement. "Home," said Harry as he stepped inside the door shaking the snow from his great coat. "Come right in," said Virginia, "it is warmer in the parlor, Harry, and I have a grate fire all ready for you. I am so glad you have come, my dear," she said, throwing her arms about his neck and clinging to him nervously, "I was beginning to be alarmed and thought of collisions, and wrecks, and in this awful storm."—"But I am here safe and sound, my little darling," said Harry, "and never to go away and leave you again, never. I feel as if I were at the end of the race. You know Virginia how hard I have been working for so many years. It has all been for this my dearie. My mother died when I was so young. We had had a beautiful home, and mother was a queen in her household, and devoted her life to making that one place a delight to us all. Then we laid her away in Graceland, and our home was broken up, and oh! the desolation that surrounded me. All was darkness and gloom. I was taken to England among relatives and never felt at home, but through it all the memory of my former home remained a guiding star, and I determined some day to make a home for myself, since my other home was gone. I devoted myself to study and hard work; I went through college; I kept away from the society of pleasure seekers and sports; I had no time for worthless amusements; and this picture of home, my guiding star, kept me from the shadowy places and away from questionable company. Through every doubt and difficulty this star lead me on. When obstacles towered before me mountain high and when I looked up, there was that picture, and my angel mother beckoning me on. Now here we are just at the door of that new home, and we are going into it tomorrow." Virginia was sobbing. "My deary, what makes you cry, when we ought to be so happy?"—"Oh I am afraid, I am afraid," sobbed Virginia. "Oh, Harry, I am so afraid."—"Afraid of what, my little bird? Who can harm you while I am here?"—"Oh, I am not afraid of any one's harming me, but oh, I am so worried."—"But what are you worried about? Everything is ready; the house is finished, and all ready for us. We will go in and lock the whole world out and then you won't be afraid."—"But, Harry, it is that home that frightens me. I never had a home like yours. I don't remember my mother's face; I never knew a mother's love. I was brought up by servants and anybody, without restraint and without a care. I went to school, of course, but my early life was spent in reading trashy books and in aimless play. My father was occupied with his business and could not look after me. He indulged my every whim, and gave me everything I asked. At Vassar we had a good time; we were taught many nice things, but oh the lack, the need of practical things. How can I go with you, Harry, to build that ideal home, when I have never even known what one was like?"—"Why, my dear Virginia, the house is all built. Mr. Ware sent me the keys and assures me that everything is complete."—"But, Harry, h-o-u-s-e does not spell home. But I guess I am a little nervous; I was so worried over the storm and your delay."—"The trains were a little late," Harry explained, "and I did not see a cab near, so I walked over from the elevated. It is farther than I thought, but I didn't mind it. Thornton will be here in the morning, I received a wireless message from him yesterday. They were to land last night, and he will be here on time. But how are things over at the settlement? I hope you havn't planned a scheme to jump from another train, or go off in a flying machine, or attempt to ride Halley's comet around the moon. I could not stand another like that."—"Oh, no," laughed Virginia, "I have resolved to be more docile hereafter. But I am delighted with what Ellen tells me of the interest those queer people are taking in the coming wedding. It will be a novel affair, and I hope it will go off smoothly."—"Novel? well I should say," said Harry, "but it is all one to me. You could lead me to the land of the Hottentots, with a gassamer thread, or set me down at a banquet with Igerotes, providing I get my Queen."—"Oh you silly kid," said Virginia, "you are making fun of my arrangement, and I shall make you sorry for this."—"Not at all, my dear, I should have suggested this very plan had you not beaten me to it," said Harry with assumed gravity. "Well, madam," said Harry, rising to go, "tomorrow evening, then? I repeat it lest I forget." —"Tomorrow evening, sir," said Virginia, loftly. "Very well, I shall call then tomorrow evening. Good night."

The hall of the settlement house was brilliantly lighted, and very tastily decorated with evergreens, holly and mistletoe. A large bank of roses was arranged in front of the platform like a miniature flower garden. Ribbons were stretched along two aisles on opposite sides of the hall. The people who had gathered to witness the ceremony were arranged in seats so as to avoid disturbance as much as possible. Virginia entered from the right, learning on her father's arm, preceded by a little Holland girl in wooden shoes, and yellow headgear, carrying a basket of beautiful flowers. Following her came Ellen with six of her co-workers, all in white. Virginia wore a snow white satin gown, and carried white roses in her hand. At the same time Harry Holcomb and his father entered from the left. They were preceded by a little Scotch boy in kilts, carrying the ring on a silver tray. Mr. Thornton followed with Dr. Warfield and several of Harry's friends. Each column moved up the aisle while Mary Cardwell Wainright played the wedding march. Rev. Mr. Scott stood near the bank of flowers. The little flower girl advanced, distributing flowers as she went, and placed the basket at Mr. Scott's feet. At the same moment the little Scotch boy handed him the tray and ring. The ceremony was short, and all was quiet in the room. The flowers were all distributed among the people, which greatly pleased them. Harry and Virginia lead the way to the dining room, followed by George Thornton and Ellen Rhinehart. Dr. and Mrs. Cardwell, Judge Warfield, and family, and many others were seated at the table.

"That's a fine bunch o' people," said old Jerry Flynn to Pat Colton. "I've knowed the most of 'em inchemit for many years. There's old Dr. Cardwell, as pulled my Patsy through measles twenty years ago, and there's Mr. Warner, a fine man he be. Me and him run the Great American for a long time. I was section boss next beyond Colton. And say, Pat, you see that gal what was jist married? Well I seed her skid off from a special wan day, as nimble as any hobo yer ever seed wid a cop after 'im. She axed me the way to Dr. Cardwell's house, I mind it well, and now she has married the vice president of the Great Consolidated Railroads. And that slick guy, I mind him too. I helped him load a gal, what was hit by a train, into his buzz wagon. She was dead, but I guess she wasn't conscious of it. So she got well; and them two fine lookin' fellers, them's both doctors, and they are both brothers, too. Before I came to Chicago, they told me what great money grabbers them city doctors be. Why a feller at the quarries told me that he knowed a specialist that would fit glasses on a blind pig for two dollars. He says them surgeons would cut a good leg off o' ye for a fee. And if you'd call one of them to treat a sprained ankle or a sore throat, he'd swipe your 'pendix and charge ye for carrying it off. Well, when little Tim, that's my grandboy, when he got sick, he had it in the hip; he was bad. He cried night and day for a week. I was afraid of them doctors, and I had no money, and no job kase I'm only a piece o' junk now from the scrap pile of the Great American. Well one of them gals over there found Tim at the house. They are always lookin' for trouble, them gals is. Well she brung them doctors over, and they cured him sound as a button. I got five dollars one time, and went overto pay 'em, and what do you suppose them doctors said? They says, 'Jerry you take that money and buy Tim a suit o' cloths,' and what do you know about that. Two doctors and neither one of them would take money. Pat I tell you them two is a great pair-o-docs they be. And Miss Rhinehart there as runs this place, she is an angel. She is always looking after everybody's trouble, and takin' care of them as needs it. When she first come here I heared fellers say as they'd burn this house down, but you just say a word agin Miss Rhinehart, now and you'll have a fight on afore you can say Jack Robinson."

At the head of the table sat a merry company, Virginia, Ellen, and Mary were in especially good spirits. "It is indeed a great pleasure to have you with us again Mr. Thornton," said Virginia. "We have often talked of you, and wondered where in this chilly old world you were wandering."—"I have never found it so chilly, Mrs. Holcomb," said George, "indeed I have found it quite the reverse."—"We have all been much interested in your rise in the world of art, and more than delighted to know of the preference given to your work in the New York exhibit," said Virginia. "Indeed," said Harry, "that picture of Elaine is an exquisite thing, and I was told that you had refused a fabulous price for it. But how did it happen that you painted Mary Cardwell Wainright?"—"It did not happen," said Thornton, with some feeling. "It could have been no other, and the picture is not for sale."—"Ah," said Virginia, "I thought you were a little sweet on Mary at one time, but when you so suddenly went away, on what we thought was your Don Quixote conquest in the world of art, I concluded that I was mistaken." Mary colored perceptibly, and Raymond laughed heartily. "It may be," said Ellen "that it has turned out a sort of an Enoch Arden affair."—"No," said Thornton, "it was the real thing, with reversion of type. Here Elaine became the Launcelot and Launcelot has become the Elaine, and since the tragedy is over and the boatman not yet arrived, I see no harm in painting a few pictures till he comes."

A commotion was heard at the other end of the table and old Jerry Flynn arose, holding a glass of water in his uplifted hand, he said: "Here is health, happiness, long life, and prosperity to the bride and groom, and three cheers for Ellen Rhinehart and this humanity house. Hip, hip, hurray!" The evening passed and the party separated. Mr. and Mrs. Holcomb going to their new home. Two days later George Thornton left for New York and immediately sailed for Europe.

Fifteen years have passed since Humanity House received its name. The conditions of the neighborhood have greatly changed. After a long fight and many discouragements the worst of the tenement houses have been removed, and in their places new convenient apartment houses of moderate rental have been built. The sanitary conditions are greatly improved, the streets are cleaner and sidewalks are kept in repair. The social conditions have greatly changed. National colorings have faded or become blended. Vice and crime have greatly diminished in the neighborhood of Humanity House. The work of the settlement itself has changed. The clubs and classes are formed not for the different nationalities, but with reference to the work to be done. The kindergarten has become an important feature. A manual training school has been established. this institution. A decided missionary spirit has shown this istitution. A decided missionary spirit has shown itself, and branch settlements have been established in other neighborhoods. Ellen Rhinehart has always been in the lead of every movement. Drs. Wainright and Warfield are still associated with the work, but they are largely occupied in other fields. Aside from their hospital and private practice, they are head surgeons for the Great Consolidated Railroads, of which Harry Holcomb is president. Mr. Warner has retired from active business and makes his home with Virginia and Harry. His chief delight and constant companions are little Tom, a sturdy lad of twelve, and Juanita, a bewitching little miss of ten, the image and counterpart of Virginia Warner of other days.

"What is this you are doing?" said Virginia as she entered Ellen's room at the settlement house, "are you preparing to move?"—"No," said Ellen, "I have been looking over some of our early records and I find one that refers to your wedding day."—"That was a great while ago," said Virginia, "many changes have taken place since then."—"I was wondering as I read this record over," said Ellen, "where all the people are that were here that night."—"Mrs. Cardwell is gone," said Virginia, "and Judge Warfield. I saw the doctor yesterday, the dear old man. He is getting feeble, but is just as bright and cheerful as the day I first saw him. Harry has a letter from George Thornton. He is living in St. Petersburg, and is much taken with Russian art. I wonder if Mary ever thinks of him now?" —"Oh, Mary is too happy in her own home to dream over the past," said Ellen. "Good by," said Virginia, rising to go. "We shall expect you to tea tomorrow."— "It is Juanita's birthday, and she will be greatly grieved if Aunt Ellen is not there."—"I will surely come," said Ellen. "Good by."

(THE END.)

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